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THE

SONGS OF SCOTLAND,

ANCIENT AND MODERN;

WITH

AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES,

Historical and Critical,

AND

CHARACTERS OF THE LYRIC POETS.

He sang
Old songs, the product of his native hills;
A skilful distribution of sweet sounds,
Opening from land to land an easy way
By melody and by the charm of verse.
WORDSWORTH.

BY ALLAN CUNNINGHAM,
AUTHOR OF SIR MARMADUKE MAXWELL, TRADITIONAL TALES, ETC.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

43500



LONDON:
PRINTED FOR JOHN TAYLOR,
WATERLOO-PLACE, PALL-MALL.
1825.

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SCOTTISH SONGS.

TO

SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

TO speak in your presence of Scottish song—to hope you will listen while I seek to trace its history, describe its varied character, and, with an honest heart and a liberal mind, examine the productions of the lyrists of our native land, seems something like the man who spoke to the sun concerning the source of light: for who can know so much about lyric lore, or bring so much knowledge and genius to illustrate it, as yourself? In supposing myself seated beside you with free license of speech, I imagine your patience equal at least to my presumption; for I cannot but know that you have nothing to learn, nor can I hope to charm you into an auditor by any extraordinary grace of language, or felicity of remark. Something indeed of what I have to say has been learned from yourself: I am unwilling to be thought so careless a reader and so dull a friend, as to come profitless away from your company or your works. It may seem a piece of tyranny unknown in literature, to echo back your own words in your own ear; but it is for another purpose that I suppose you so near me—

your presence will have a favourable influence over a spirit, which, though it comes gladly to an elected work, is conscious of its defects, and will be willing to imagine itself admonished into more than ordinary conciseness and regularity, by the presence of superior genius. This will likewise enable me to escape from the nice formalities and subtle distinctions of a regular essay, into the more pleasant labour of a desultory introduction; where character may be more closely observed than method, where the fixed or the vagrant graces of song will be traced more anxiously than the works through which they have wandered, from their first appearance till now; and where I shall sometimes gladly resign the hopeless task of finding era and author to our ancient lyrics, for the more agreeable labour of illustrating them by criticism and anecdote. I shall endeavour to remember that brevity is a flower that never blooms out of season—that he who wishes to be read, must write to be understood; and that, though trusting more for my success to nature than education, I must seek the aid of both in a work where information and research are required: what cannot be got by nature's voluntary light, may be found by the lantern of learning.

When literature slackened in its homage to men of riches and rank, painting and sculpture came and reflected back to titled pride and opulent vanity their own image, with such minuteness and felicity of resemblance, as rendered all opposition from the pen hopeless and vain. As dedications are therefore uncommon or unknown, it may be expected that I should assign some

reason for departing from the ordinary course of authors: it is from no wish to seem singular, nor from any desire to revive those acts of sometimes blamable and always involuntary homage, with which some of the greatest of men sought to propitiate some of the meanest. Had you owed your greatness to birth or to favour alone, I should have regarded you in silence as one of those gilded images which fortune sets up for worship on her high places: but your fame comes from a nobler source—from that influence which much wiser men than I am have not scrupled to call divine; from that art unteachable, untaught, which can neither be created nor propagated. My admiration is therefore voluntary—a natural impulse which I wish not to conceal, which I might not if I would; which pride feels no wound to own, nor independence less erectness in acknowledging. I shall now proceed with the subject,—though it seems no great symptom of wandering, to speak of a poet in an introduction to song.

I am inclined to claim for the very oldest of our Scottish songs, a moderate antiquity and a humble origin. The greatest lover of Scotland, will be unable to find the wild flowers of her lyric verse floating farther up the stream of her history than the reign of Robert Bruce: and the fondest admirer of her song cannot point to a surer source for its purest and most lasting strains, than to our herdsmen and warriors. Those who wish to find its origin among the wild and shadowy traditions of the original people of the land, ought to tell us why the

lyric muse has confined her melting and heroic breathings to a long, narrow, and sometimes barren strip of border country; and those who imagine we have received the impulse from the south, should show us some of those coeval traditionary strains which inspired our ancestors. I am telling the story for England as well as for ourselves, when I say, that almost all our romantic or martial ballads, and almost all our songs which bear the peculiar stamp of remoter times, and claim distinction from the tales they tell, or the names they celebrate, find a local habitation nigh the border. Nothing can be more remarkable than the similarity in character and feeling of the strains, whether of peace or war, or love or sorrow, which were breathed of old from either bank of the Tweed; and nothing can be more certain than that this resemblance has long since ceased, and that England has changed the natural tone and peculiar character of her song. That she has changed for the better I am not so sure,—let me weigh the merits of Scottish and English song with a careful and impartial hand.

When Cowley speaks of "dancing words and speaking strings," he expresses with much happiness the felicitous union of poetry and music. The natural unstudied grace of thought, the lucky ease and unsought beauty of language which make lyric verse move and breathe, and without which it is unworthy of the society of Music, its less divine but no less graceful sister, seem common to both countries. Here the resemblance ceases—a Scottish song is a story, an English song is a sentiment; the former seems more akin to truth and warmth, the latter to court-

liness and delicacy. The Scotsman mingles the name of his mistress with his strain; and lavishes loveliness and beauty upon her, and assembles around her all that is fair or fragrant in the evening landscape: the Englishman conceals his mistress in a foreign mask; and pours his fancy more than his heart around a natural sentiment or a neat conceit, adorning it with all the elegance and melody of a rich and varied language. The former sings openly of his affection, and describes his hopes and fears with all the candour of youthful enthusiasm: the latter has no wish to make the wide world his confidante; he is discreet in his most rapturous moments, and understands from experience all the mystery of love-making. The former thinks of nothing but his love, and seems proud to let the world know how much he admires her, and how passing fair she is for whom he is pouring out his whole heart: the latter neither trusts us with his true love's name, nor with a portrait of her person, nor is he in any haste to discover in what land she lives, or whether she be lofty or low. The former goes out to woo in a pastoral land, and inanimate nature comes in for its share of rapture; he tells us of the stars which shine above them, and the names of the flowers over which they walk;—the sweetness of the hawthorn under which they sit is not forgotten, and the stream at their feet has a name, or acquires one from that moment: the latter indulges in no such pastoral imaginings, he sits under a painted ceiling and a gilded chandelier, and makes love

"When the wine cup shines in light.

The lyric muse of the north is the muse of simple nature: she loves to expatiate by hill and dale, with her locks flowing on her shoulders, her garments lifted above the grass "till half a leg is scrimply seen," and with a look like the Peggy of Allan Ramsay when she went to gather dew. Her more courtly sister of the south loves the lighted hall and the illuminated city: she goes rustling in silks, with paste gems and diamonds in her hair, is a complete pattern of external grace and decorum of behaviour—

> And prudence is her o'erword aye;
> She talks of rank and fashion.

If I have to accuse the latter of reserve, and with breathing out her love as coldly as the icy words of some of the old lecturing Moralities, I am afraid I shall not be able to excuse the former of occasional trespasses against outward decorum, and with going higher kilted at times than even the tolerant may think discreet. But perhaps this very freedom arises from the dramatic form in which our northern songs, like all early national poetry, are conceived. In their lively presentation of person and incident, and time and place, they resemble a dramatic scene; and as many of them contain pictures of common life, there has been less desire to extract the poetry alone, than to stamp freshly off the whole scene, and reflect back a true image of nature. A total want of dramatic incident and character, and a desire to address the mind alone, has secured to English song the welcome absence of familiar coarseness and rude interchange of

speech, which augment, at the same time, the life and the indelicacy of some of our early songs. This desire to limit itself to a single sentiment, and intertwine all the grace of verse round a smart saying or a happy conceit, led an English critic to imagine that whatever went farther than this ceased to be song. This seems the definition of one who had a better acquaintance with the latter than the elder lyrics of England; but I cannot consent to withhold from the popular poetry of the Gothic nations, the very name, both oral and written, by which it was admired and descended to posterity. I am willing to be no wiser than our ancestors, who refused not the name of song to much that could be sung; and were pleased to include many long ballads and portions of romance in the poetry to which voice and instrument added their charms. The very nature of love, its joys, its sorrows, and its fears, must induce it to overflow those pedantic limits into which the critic's wand wishes to conjure it. The heart desires to disclose something more than the solitary sentiment enjoined by the critic. The passion of love, like the muse of Burns, rages like an imprisoned fiend till it pours out itself in song; and all the liveliest revelations of the heart, bear the name and form, and breathe of the beauty which inspired them.

To seek, with the hope of finding, a certain era for the origin of Scottish song, would be like the boy who chased the rainbow:—when he reached the knoll on which its glittering extremity seemed to rest, he saw it shining on a distant hill; and when he succeeded in gaining the summit, he saw the beautiful vision vanishing in the

ocean. We see before us a large mass of lyrics, such as perhaps no nation can surpass, either in number or beauty: we look a hundred years back, and the number is sensibly diminished, and many of the brightest are gone: we pass onward a hundred years more, and we see many of our present favourites in a ruder dress, and hear the muse breathe a rougher and less melodious strain; another century, and there are frequent lapses and chasms in traditionary verse, and the voice of the muse is more rude and martial; another century and her musings are scattered in fragments over the land like the ravings of the sibyl; and, finally, her voice has ceased, and history is content to quote a verse and speak of the influence of her song. The skill of learning, the labour of industry, and the utmost application which genius can make to the pages of the chronicler and the historian, can only end in the conviction, that song of a domestic and a martial kind has been long natural to Scotland; but truth must call in the aid of conjecture, and conjecture must seek the assistance of national vanity, before we can satisfy ourselves that we possess, without a very strong infusion of recent poetry, change of language, and alteration of thought, any one of the perfect original strains which gratified our ancestors. Credulity may believe that the songs which cheered our rude and martial forefathers, breathed the same varied strain, and contained the seeds from which our innumerable songs have sprung; and fancy may imagine how much or how little of the ancient spirit of poetry influences the court, the camp, and cottage now, which was abroad of old, and sang, like Dante or Cary,

Of ladies and of knights, the toils and ease
That witched us into love and courtesy.

It is an ungrateful labour to dispel agreeable delusions; and the fictions which soothe national pride, or please family vanity, are those to which we most fondly cling. But when truth strips the romance from history, and seeks the proofs by which we lay claim to lyrical antiquity, we find nothing left of all those primitive strains, which gave a Scottish tongue to our national melodies, but a few rude lines and a few questionable fragments. It is easy indeed to say, that everywhere we see traces of the national muse of earlier days,—that we discover, over all the border lowlands her footsteps more than half defaced, and hear her well-known voice dying away like the last murmur of a distant melody. But truth is not allowed to make her escape in general expressions: what history has preserved, or veritable tradition handed down, I shall gladly notice; and I may lament, with the poet of old, the ravages of time and the imperfections of oral remembrance, and that, unless we are aided by revelation, we know little more than nothing.

The period when the Scottish language began to be heard above the barbarous discordance of the conquering and the conquered, cannot be accurately known; and it is equally vain to seek to be informed, at what time it flowed in a stream pure and plentiful enough for the uses of the muse. There must have been a large interval of years, while the Celtic language was step by step retiring to the northern hills, and the present language was

secretly moulding itself on the Saxon, the Danish, and the Norman, in which our poetry appeared of many colours, and caught a strip and a star from every fresh infusion from the west or the south. That our earliest poets spoke a kind of Babylonish dialect, fit to confound the united wisdom of many colleges, I am not prepared to say; but it is much easier to prove that the peculiar poetry of the various tribes or nations who turned England and Scotland into a prize-fighter's stage, gave a tinge or an impulse, which is yet visible in the popular poetry of the land. If we can indulge in the pleasing belief that Fingal lived and that Ossian sang; and if we are to judge of the aspirations of the Celtic muse by the wild, and pathetic, and chivalrous strains which were so long and so wondrously preserved for Macpherson to find, we may conclude that the lowland muse owes less to her Celtic sister than to the wild legends of the Norwegians and Danes. The Scottish and the Scandinavian ballads or songs have a close and a vivid resemblance: the same spirit seems to have conceived, and the same spirit executed them. They abound in the same wild and singular superstitions; the same thirst for the marvellous by sea, and the incredible by land. They present an image of a rude, a martial, and original people: might is their source of right; personal beauty and personal bravery are their only visible perfections; their ships are their homes, the field of battle their delight; plunder their reward; and the chief judge and arbitrator in all dubious matters is the sword. Blood flows, through their romantic as well as their

martial strains; and if they draw images of female loveliness and beauty, it is but to throw them into the arms of the savage hero of the tale, or upon the sword point of some fiercer rival. But steeped as they are in superstition and in blood, they have many redeeming graces of graphic power, rude chivalry and fervent pathos. They exhibit that sharp and fresh presentment of incident and scene, which will ever be found in the songs of those who seek to see nature for themselves. They have the fire-edge of first thought strong upon them, with that minuteness and particularity, which make fiction speak with the tongue of truth.

In much of this energy of character the Celtic poetry shares; but its manners are more refined, its sentiments more generous, its superstitions more sublime, and its chivalry rivals the brightest era of European knighthood. I speak of the character of the epic songs of Ossian, which, hidden like a miraculous relic for more than a thousand years, came forth to support the expiring traditions of the land, and to revive the fame of the ancient heroes, who were about to retire for ever, nameless and unsung, to their wreaths of mountain mist, to drive their visionary cars and pursue the shadowy deer. The other remains of Celtic song, which I have examined, seem to describe a ruder and less gifted people; they delight in catalogues of barbarous names—in clusters of sonorous epithets and interminable traditions. They seem barren in generosity of sentiment; their story is some nameless feud; and their imagery is limited to the heathy desert and the misty waste. The summons to the foray, the

call to battle, and the rushing to the charge, are favourite themes. The Celtic bards are unequalled in their stirring calls to arms, and for

Chanting rhymes of deadly feud.

But I am far from sure that they have influenced the border poets in their choice of subjects, or in the manner in which they have treated them.

By examining the expression and spirit of our early national poetry, written and oral, by perusing the ancient historians and writers of England and the Scottish lowlands, and by weighing, as well as a limited balance will allow, the popular language of the two countries, I may safely conclude, that they are peopled by one race, who spoke of old the same language, who were sprung from the same ancestry, and were divided in nothing save the desire of dominion. When the Saxon language was inoculated with the Danish, and coloured with the Norman, it found time to subside into something fixed and settled, and its voice was gradually heard over the island as far, and perhaps farther, than the banks of the Forth. To a Scotsman the ancient literature of England is quite accessible, and comes closer to his mother-tongue than the more pure and more polished, but not more forcible, literary language of the present day. Many of the words of Wickliffe and Chaucer, and even of Shakespeare, have ceased to be living English, and are still living Scotch; and I cannot help imagining that the language of the land might recover some of its lost strength, by calling into life and popularity many of its neglected

words. The whole of the populous county of York speaks a language which I am willing to call Scottish, since I understand it through means of my native tongue; and various other northern counties give a very lively image in their speech of the days of Chaucer and Barbour. A poet and critic has acknowledged, that Barbour adorned the English language by a strain of versification, expression, and imagery, far superior to his age; and I may say of Wintoun, who wrote at a later period, that his language is more rude and his orthography more impure, inasmuch as his genius was inferior. When we come to the days of Gawin Douglas and Dunbar, we are so sensible of the difference between the language which they write, and that of the poets of England who immediately follow them, that we are almost tempted to imagine that the northern tongue, instead of advancing in correctness and purity, had relapsed into obsolete ruggedness and uncouth barbarism. I have no wish to refuse my admiration to the works of these two exquisite poets; they can afford to be accused of an affectation of uncommon words, of a wish to embellish what Sir David Lyndsay calls the "maternal tongue" with "aureate termis." But they have refused to speak the popular language of their country; and by studding their verses with learned words, have become more inaccessible to a common reader than the pages of Barbour, who wrote so long before them.

But while the more courtly and more learned poets were sacrificing the sense of genius to show the vanity of learning, the oral lyric poetry of Scotland had in-

sensibly become popular, and its authors seem to have indulged no higher wish than to express what they felt, and describe what they saw, in the common work-day-world language of their native country. But if the rustic authors were unacquainted with the unfortunate art of embellishing their strains, it must be confessed that they were content with very homely words, paid little regard to regularity of rhyme, and satisfied themselves with very rugged numbers. Though it is said by some learned persons that the first language of man is poetry, I am afraid to claim for our ancestors the name of poets in their first recorded attempts at verse. Wintoun indeed has quoted a portion of a lyric poem, which is very sweet and flowing; and as it is written on the unhappy wars which followed the death of Alexander the Third, it has been pronounced as old as the days of John Baliol. But to me it has a much more modern sound. It is too melodious and too alliterative for that period, and seems to be of the same age as the rhyming chronicler himself. It glides as smoothly along as the numbers of the present day:—

When Alexander our king was dead,
That Scotland led in love and le,
Away wes sons of ale and bread,
Of wine and wax, of game and glee;
Our gold was changed into lead:
Christ, born into virginitie,
Succour Scotland, and remede
That stad in this perplexitie.

I know that Leyden, no mean authority, quotes and embellishes it as a relic of the age to which the Prior of Lochleven ascribes it, and that Ritson, the most suspicious of critics, and the most scrupulous of antiquaries, regards the verse as genuine. But Leyden perhaps spoke hastily, and at least spoke young, and as he was not in pursuit of truth, might see nothing meritorious in seeking a less ambitious antiquity for the verse; and with regard to Ritson, experience has taught me to abate my confidence in even the most considerate judgment of a mere antiquary.

But we have a fragment of a national song on which suspicion has not fastened; and of an age, too, which lessens regret for the dubious authenticity of the other. I overpass, and overpass willingly, some very rude rhymes on the siege of Berwick in 1296: the minstrel scoff was repaid by the English with rhymes equally barbarous; and as if the reply of the rhymer had not been sufficiently keen, the sword of Edward followed, far sharper than the severest satire. I also overpass the song of Sir Patrick Spence, the earliest of our lyrics, which sought to unite sentiment with external nature and domestic or historic circumstance; and I pass it only, because I am unwilling, from internal evidence and traditional testimony alone, to place it at the head of Scottish song. Nor shall I dwell on the Gude Wallace, a rough and vigorous lyric, bearing in various places the sharp stamp of great antiquity, and in others the softer and more sentimental infusion of a later age. The latter is one of those songs which has floated down the stream of oral memory

for centuries; and perhaps was popular in an era, which we have Fordun's authority for saying, possessed several songs in honour of Sir William Wallace. But I gladly go from conjecture to certainty.

After the battle of Bannockburn, says Fabyan, "The Scottes, inflamed with pride and derision of the English, made this rhyme as followeth—

Maydens of Englande,
Sore may ye morne,
For your lemmans, ye
Haue lost at Bannockysburne.
With heue-a-lowe,
What weneth the king of England
So soon to have won Scotland?
Wyth rumbylowe.

"Thys song," he adds, "was after many days sung in dances in the carols of the maidens and mynstrelles of Scotland, to the reproofe and disdain of Englishmen: with diuers others which I overpasse." The testimony of the old historian is supported by Caxton's Chronicle, which gives us some farther information respecting this very curious relic:—"Wherefore the Scottes said, in reproof and despite of King Edward, for as moche as he loved to be gone by water, and also for he was discomfited at Bannokesborne; therefore maydens made a song thereof in that country of King Edward of England, and in this manner they songe—" The quotation of Caxton extends no farther than that of Fabyan, and seems much more corrupt. But it enables us to judge

of the mixed nature of the song. It seems something of a lyrical condolence, as well as a song in "disdain and reproof" of English pride. It sympathizes with the maidens who had lost their lovers; and compares the magnificence of Edward's march to Bannockburn with the shame of his flight and his escape in a fishing-boat. This very early and not inelegant strain is more sweet and flowing than the popular English verses of the same period; it commences in the gentle spirit of our best lyrics, and strikes with truth and modesty the true tone of our best and most moving songs. I should have considered it as a song rather of sorrow than of scorn, had not Caxton supplied the satiric allusion to Edward's flight, and had I not discovered that the burthen was also satirical. In the romance of Richard Cœur de Lion, as the English fleet sailed towards the coast of Syria, the minstrel sings, that the king saw a large Saracen ship of war, and, arming himself for the fight, urged on his rowers with characteristic impatience:—

> Roweth on fast! who that is faint,
> In evil water may he be dreynt!
> They rowed hard, and sung thereto,
> With hevelow and rumbeloo.

The Scottish poets of the days of Bruce knew how to make a singular line, from a popular English romance, sharpen the satire of a lyric, which was once so well known as to be quoted by three historians. I know not whether it is to the English romance or the Scottish song that King James alludes in his Peblis to the Play.

Hope, Calye, and Cardronow,
Gathered out thick-fold,
With heigh, and how, rumbelow,
The young folks were full bold:
The bagpipe blew, and they outthrew,
Out of the towns untold;
Lord! such a shout was them among,
When they were o'er the wold!

As this is the first genuine fragment of what is now widely known by the name of Scottish song, so is it the last that for a long space of time finds a place in history. With the exception of a few fragments of a satiric rather than a pathetic kind, and many names of lyrics once common and popular, we have nothing of all the strains which amused or moved our ancestors till printing came to the aid of the muse, and men, from vanity or curiosity, began to collect her labours. The early flowers of our song are soon collected from the wide field of history; they are few, and when they are together, the garland seems hardly worthy of gathering. The next that comes has something of the sharpness of the national emblem—an epigram rather than a song; but so pointed and keen, that in those days of fierce chivalry, it may have caused the breaking of many a lance. When David, the son of Robert Bruce, married Jane, the sister of King Edward, in 1328, the Scots in scorn called her Jane Make-peace, and wrote various Truffes, Roundes, and Songs, in derision of the alliance, and of the costly and gaudy dresses of the En-

glish knights. We owe the following satiric verse to the kindness of Fabyan; and from Caxton we learn, that it was fixed on the doors of the Cathedral Church at York by the Scottish ambassadors, during the residence of the court in the north. It sounds like a part of a song:—

Long beardis hartles,
Paynted hoodes wytles,
Gay cottes graceless,
Maketh England thryfteless.

The poetic and satiric spirit of the north is further illustrated by the curious story which Bower relates of Sir William Dalyell; and which is told with such liveliness in the notes to Marmion, as makes me afraid to attempt an abridgment. It seems that in 1390, the Scottish knight, whom the historian praises for his wisdom and his lively wit, was on a mission to the English court, where he saw Sir Piers Courtenay parading about the palace, wearing a rich mantle, bearing for device an embroidered falcon, with this rhyme—

I bear a falcon fairest of flight;
Whoso pinches at her, his death is dight
In graith.

Sir William appeared next day in a rich mantle, similar to that of Courtenay, bearing a magpie instead of a falcon, with a motto which parodied the vaunting inscription of the Englishman.

I bear a pie, picking at a piece;
Whoso picks at her, I shall pick at his nese,
In faith.

Sir Piers, who was vain of a very handsome person and renowned for his skill in tilting, challenged Sir William to a just with sharp lances. They ran three courses, and in the third, the handsome Englishman lost two of his front teeth: he complained that Dalyell left his helmet unlaced, which gave way at the touch of his spear, and enabled him to shun the shock of the encounter. The Scot agreed to run six courses more, liable to the forfeit of two hundred pounds, if, on entering the lists, any unequal advantage should be detected on either side. When they were on the point of closing, Dalyell demanded, with a smile, that Courtenay should consent to the extinction of one of his eyes, as he himself had lost one in the field of Otterburne. The other demurred to the equalization of optical powers, and the king commanded that Dalyell should receive the forfeit, saying he excelled the English both in wit and valour. It is not every old historian who illustrates the age of which he writes with a story of rich humour and sarcastic rhyme.

For the sake of keeping together these satiric verses, I have omitted to mention the remains of a song quoted by Godscroft, on the murder of the lord of Liddesdale in 1353. I know not that by delaying it I have offered any violence to precedence of composition; for I confess the lines have no very antique sound, and certainly enjoyed the benefit of oral transmission for some time before they reached the ear of the historian of the house of Douglas.

"The lord of Liddesdale being at his pastime, hunting

in Ettricke Forest, is beset by William Earl of Douglas, and assailed, wounded, and slain beside Galsewood; upon a jealousy that the earl had conceived of him with his lady, as the report goeth; for so says the old song—

The countesse of Douglas out of her boure she came,
And loudly there that she did call,
It is for the lord of Liddesdale
That I let all these tears downfall.

"The song also declareth how she did write her love-letters to Liddesdale, to dissuade him from that hunting. It tells likewise the manner of the taking of his men, and his own killing at Galsewood; and how he was carried the first night to Lindin Kirk, a mile from Selkirk, and was buried within the abbacie of Melrose." To express joy, or scorn, or sorrow, on any remarkable occurrence, was the custom of the ancient muse; her subjects were real, or believed: fiction was not become a profession, she had

No idly feigned poetic pains,

she dealt only in national or domestic history. It was not likely, therefore, that the fall of a favourite and successful hero would escape such notice; but there is no better authority than this oral song for charging Earl Douglas with jealousy, and his lady with light behaviour. History imputes the murder of the Flower of Chivalry to other causes; and it must be confessed, that though he deserved not to be murdered, he hardly merited to live. I am therefore of opinion, that the song was

written by some minstrel, so long after the event it celebrates, that length of time sanctioned the fiction. Such expressions as Godscroft, on the authority of the song, imputes to the countess, were common among ladies in the times of chivalry, and implied admiration rather than criminal affection. The queen of France wrote with her own hand a love-letter to our James the Fourth, calling him her love; and desiring him to raise an army, and step three steps on English ground, and strike three strokes with a sword, for her sake. We all know how readily he obeyed; and the price which he paid, dear as it was, would have been more willingly given, could he have foreseen on Flodden Field the heroic poem which his fate has inspired. But no one accuses the queen of France of an attachment to James, and no one imagines that James regarded her more tenderly than any other lady. Her letter was the common language of the times —the words of politic beauty in the ear of chivalrous vanity. Nor was the kiss which the Princess Margaret of Scotland bestowed on Alain Chartier, while asleep in the palace gallery, regarded by her ladies of honour as very improper, or indecorous: a kiss which Menage says will immortalize her. It was a salute according to the precepts, or, at least, the spirit, of chivalry; and the excuse of the princess was in the same strain,—she did not kiss the man, but the mouth which had uttered so many fine sayings.

Were I to suppose this curious fragment to be the earliest specimen we have of the language and spirit of chivalry employed in song, it might be imagined that I

am ignorant of the romantic song of True Thomas, in which chivalry seems in the dawn; and the historical romance of Barbour, a poem of which Scotland may be justly proud. The first is a wild fiction, created more for the sake of embalming a popular superstition than for indulging in prophecy; and it unites the common belief of the people with all the magnificence of an Arabian tale. The second is the adventures of the great Robert Bruce and his illustrious companions, where poetry is called in to adorn truth, and render accurate and unimpeachable history more lively and agreeable. Nothing can surpass the ease and readiness with which the poet pours the stream of a fine imagination and a tender heart round the varied fortunes of his heroes, and seizes on all the poetical features and incidents which animate narration and elevate story. Fancy here is the servant, not the master, of fact; and imagination is made the vassal of a sober and deliberate judgment. Yet, scorning to use what king James calls the "flowered pen," he is more romantic than romance; and has breathed a heroism and tenderness through a period of peril and blood, which has communicated itself to the rudest strains of our minstrelsy. He has stamped in poetry the chivalrous deeds, and manners, and feelings of the Scottish people; and given a living spirit of nationality, to what he, with unexpected modesty, calls a romance. He is the Froissart of our country; with equal spirit and graphic power, but with a kinder and tenderer heart. I wish I could have discovered in his narratives more frequent traces of our ancient national songs;

but the Scottish historians have been exceedingly penurious in such quotation, and we owe more to honest Fabyan than to all the chroniclers of the north. Barbour indeed forbears to relate the defeat of Sir Andrew Harcla, by Sir John de Soulis, the Scottish governor of Eskdale, inasmuch as it was so fully rehearsed in a popular song that it required no comment:

> Young women, when they will play,
> Sing it among them ilka day.

This is an authentic reference to a very early song; for John de Soulis, knight of Torthorwald in Dumfriesshire, governor of Eskdale, and grandson of Nicholas de Soulis, the competitor with Bruce for the crown, was slain, along with Edward Bruce and many gallant warriors, at the battle of Fagher in Ireland, in 1318.

I have been mixing romance with history, ancient times with latter; and introducing a princess of Scotland before I introduced her more illustrious father, James the First. To this accomplished prince, the author of our first serious and purely imaginative poem, the King's Quair, and our earliest truly comic and humorous and homely poem, Peblis to the Play, Major assigns the reputation of composing many excellent Scottish songs, which were popular while the historian wrote; and Tassoni ascribes to him the composition of many sacred pieces of vocal music, and also the invention of a new kind of music, plaintive and melancholy, and different from all others. No one has contested the king's poetical honours; but the assertion of

the Italian has stirred up all the fiddlers and pipers of the north and south—all alike anxious to defend the antiquity of the several sorts of composition, and afraid to impute the invention of a new kind of melody to a mere mortal. They seem unwilling to believe that the strains which their instruments emit originate in a meaner place than above; and turn in disdain from the claim of King James, to ascend among the mists of antiquity, in search of the fountain from which the national music has flowed. Without consulting the Druid under his oak,—or seeking melody from a painted Pict or a naked Caledonian,—or inquiring from tradition what tune Wallace played when he visited the English host, disguised as a harper,—or pausing to consider the nature of the sound which the Scottish horns made when Lord Douglas wasted the north of England, which Froissart declares was as infamous as if all the devils in hell had been there,—let me state my own feelings in a matter of mere belief; for who can hope that history, having left song unnoticed, would condescend to chronicle sound?

If our Scottish song has preserved its ancient character,—and it has, else the fragments which have descended to us have deceived me,—I think there can be little doubt that our music and poetry were coeval, or twin-born. It is evident from the gliding ease and peculiar structure of the verse, that our early songs, written as well as oral, have been composed to be sung; for no man will readily compose a successful song, without accompanying the act of composition with a kind of subdued or audible chant, in the spirit of the air to which he

wishes it to be sung. He who would conceive song must be under the influence of some kind of harmony; and though he may not be able to sing, he must have that internal sense of melody which will make his words flow in unison with music. There is much narrative as well as lyric poetry composed under the impulse of music; in many passages of Marmion, and the Lady of the Lake, I can hardly resist breaking out into an involuntary chant as I peruse them. If I am told that the author has not the art or the power of giving audible utterance to song, my answer is, that he is inaudibly melodious, and fully possessed with the spirit of music: else how would his poetry rouse and animate me into singing? But there is a farther proof of the early alliance of poetry and music, which I hope others have felt as well as myself, else it almost looks too strange to obtain credit. When I was a boy, and committed to memory many of our ancient as well as modern songs, I never learned one of them without making myself master of some kind of melody which re-echoed the words; and, curious to say, most of those airs which the words suggested corresponded, I afterwards found, in a great measure with the proper tune! The nature of the song and the distribution of its emphatic words suggested the general character and spirit of the air. I am inclined to consider many of our melodies exceedingly old; and that the melodies, which Tassoni attributes to the genius of King James, were only new creations in the feeling and character of what was already popular.

I gladly return to the poetry of James: but we can-

not expect to find in an allegorical poem, written in prison at the age of nineteen, any lively sketches of manners, or paintings of an historical or domestic kind—for which he seems to have been eminently gifted. Nor can I observe any allusion to the lyrics of his native land. But though song is not directly noticed, he has given some of the sweetest examples of musical versification, and such vivid sketches of silent nature, as were unequalled in poetry, whether Scottish or English, at the period he wrote. We see every where traces of his fondness for melody, and the influence which beauty, the song of birds, and the budding trees, had upon his heart and his fancy. We feel a wish to join in what Gray so beautifully calls

The untaught harmony of spring,

when the royal poet gives his birds human utterance:

Come sing with us, Away, winter away!
Come, summer, come, the sweet season and sun.

His poetry has never been praised so highly as it deserves. It has a modesty and delicacy unknown among the elder worthies of English verse. The loss of his lyrics, if they were conceived with equal spirit, and executed with equal happiness of language and sense of nature and melody, is a loss which we may well deplore. In his Peblis to the Play, a poem full of rustic festivity and mirth and broil, we have his peasants quoting songs, dancing to the sound of the bagpipe, and Will Swan, the miller, desiring to perform what he calls the

Schamon's Dance, for the amusement of the multitude. This was probably a kind of hornpipe accompanied by action and song, and performed in character. The early and unhappy death of James was a loss which his country long deplored, and avenged with such singular ferocity, as made the author of the Muses' Threnodie exclaim,

A cruel crime, rewarded cruellie.

I come now to a part of my subject over which I would gladly pass,—which has employed the rich Gothic genius of Percy, and the dry barren criticism of Ritson,—on which the Welsh have doted and the Irish dreamed,—the history of our Minstrels and Bards. But I come to it as one who comes to a deep and a broad stream, over which there is no bridge, on which there is no boat, where there is no ford visible, through which he cannot wade, and dare not try to swim, yet over which he must pass before he can be in safety or in shelter. I must throw myself into the flood, and trust to fortune. An introduction to song would be incomplete without some notice of a race or order of men, frequently mentioned in history and tradition, who experienced the favour of kings, and tasted the severity of our laws; and whose genius and labours are supposed with truth to have materially influenced the character and augmented the fame and number of our lyrics. In seeking to separate conjecture from truth, and to distinguish between the dreams of national vanity and the more sober and rational conclusions of men whose fancy was kept in awe by the interposition of good sense and honest judgment,

I have no wish to strip from the minstrel the robes of Percy, and cover him with the rags of Ritson. To show him seated with kings, invested with collars of gold and singing the deeds of heroes, and then to divest him of his dignity, and class him with the idle and the base, brand him as a disturber of peace, and put him down as a fugitive and vagabond, is to draw no fictitious portrait: it is the common story of many communities and individuals, who abused the favour, and experienced the caprice, of princes. The painting of Percy is that of a poet, to whose eye was ever present the sweeping robes and jewelled dresses of the Gothic courts of romance, and who sometimes ascribed more than the world felt to the pathos and spirit of old song. But Ritson was more than the reverse, he doubted almost all that other men believed; he looked on the promised land of verse, and said, the water is naught and the ground barren. This fastidiousness, and querulous regard for accuracy, did far more harm than Percy's rich and fruitful imagination, which, like the first spell in the magician's book, made

> The cobweb on a dungeon wall
> Seem tapestry in lordly hall;
> A nutshell seem a gilded barge;
> A sheeling seem a palace large.

Whereas Ritson beheld all with the spell-bound look of the warder of Branksome, who, for the heir of Buccleuch and his mysterious guide, saw only

> A terrier and lurcher passing out.

But before I proceed to draw a farther parallel be-

tween the poet and the critic, as I am speaking of imaginary things, and periods of darkness and tradition, it may be as well to listen to the claims of the Bards of Ireland, who, with the Welsh, desire to take precedence in all that concerns our national music and song.

In the history of Irish poetry, the order of creation is reversed, the evening and morning come not according to natural order; light precedes darkness, and the dawn is brighter than the mid-day. In the traditions of all other nations, the farther back we go the darker our way becomes: with the bards of Ireland we may travel into the remotest times, and still our road grows broader and fairer; and the excellence of their poetry, the beauty of their persons, and their importance in the world, augment as we proceed. We are indebted to the research or to the fancy of Walker for much curious information respecting them; and if we may credit common belief, Ireland has been famous for song for a longer period than even national vanity seems willing to name. A thousand years might be safely taken from the duration of its poetic fame, and yet enough be left to soothe or please a very reasonable share of pride; and more than enough to stagger the belief of a very zealous antiquary. Instead of a herd of wild deer chased over a wilder heath by a troop of barefooted barbarians, and a rude song of triumph or of joy when the venison was preparing on the hearth-fire of a hovel of turf and heather, we are introduced to splendid palaces, to princes and poets in scarlet and in gold, to the thrill of a thousand musical instruments, and polite conten-

tions between mighty bards in civilized song. All this could never be.

To imagine a people famous beyond all nations in ancestry and song, with academies for instructing noble youths in this heaven-born art, with poets gifted with the threefold powers of bard, prophet, and priest, with kings eager to reward and peasants to admire, and where the sword of the hero and the hearts of princesses were alike under the control and keeping of poesy,—is only to realize to the imagination the court of Ollam Fodla, monarch of Ireland, in the year of the world 3236. I claim some indulgence from the ordinary reader for choosing an era of such modest pretensions to antiquity, when I might have carried him farther into the regions of Celtic romance by a thousand years, and still have presented him with Irish Poesy grown to full size, living with princes, founding academies and palaces, and revelling in epic song. When Ollam came to the throne, he summoned all his tributary kings and national bards, and after recording some salutary laws in the Psalter of Tara, or government chronicle, he proceeded to pass an act regarding the production of that scarce commodity called poetic genius. "He ordained that none but young men of genius and noble descent should be admitted into the order of bards; that the profession should be hereditary, and, when a bard died, his estate was to devolve not to his eldest son, but to such of his family as discovered the greatest talents for music and poetry." I have not heard what effect this law, which removed that ancient right of nature to con-

ceive and bring forth genius in her own capricious way, had upon song; and from the silence of history and tradition, I am inclined to believe that the glory of Irish verse was not at all increased by ordaining that none should sing but those of noble descent.

It is to be regretted that this great and literary prince and people have left us nothing to admire but an empty name: of all the poets cherished and rewarded, not one has descended in song to posterity. A great people without any visible monuments of greatness, and a literary nation without any traces of literature, present a riddle too profound for the solution of man. The temples of Greece,—a land strown with works of art, and every hill and vale living yet in living song,—give us an image of ancient greatness which illustrates history; but of all the splendid poetical academies of Ireland, where the bards studied nine years by torch-light, of all the songs they sang after this laborious apprenticeship, we have neither a stone standing nor a verse remaining. When I am told that the bards marched to battle with flowing robes and glittering harps, and stood apart, while the ranks closed, to single out acts of heroism to record in song, I can imagine a rude and uncultivated and martial people, who, like the Normans, advanced on their enemies amid warlike music and song; but when I am also told, that the women on a day of battle rushed in among their husbands and brothers, animating them with their war songs and the music of the cruit or harp, I forget that I am reading of a people who lay claim to superior civilization, and think of a

horde of martial barbarians, such as the Romans encountered in the naked Britons and painted Caledonians. It is in vain that the penury of this original people is sought to be hid in magnificent words: the rewards which their princes bestowed on their poets and historians speak of a nation of shepherds—of kings who had little to give, and of genius paid in kind. When the Welsh law restrained bards from begging the king's horse, hawk, or greyhound, we suppose those inspired people were a privileged race, and that it was a point of honour or of superstition to present them with what they desired; and it is not illiberal to imagine, that as the law extended no protection to the king's plate and coin, he had no coin or plate to protect from the need or the avarice of the poets. In like manner, when we find that a teller of thirty Irish tales was rewarded with a large cow, the relater of forty tales with three that gave milk, while he who repeated fifty stories obtained five cows, or a chariot, or rather a trail-car, according to the nature of his compositions, we have a very curious and instructive picture of a people semi-barbarous, who had nothing more valuable than their flocks; and whose palaces in the midst of woody deserts, instead of being embellished with sculptures, and filled with paintings and books, and vessels of silver and gold, were perhaps filled with milch cows, and other indications of pastoral wealth. Nor am I sure that by coming nearer our own times by a thousand years, we shall see any extraordinary influence which the numerous colleges and literary regulations of Ireland exercised over the intellect or the

visible wealth of the princes and people. In the reign of King Hugh, A. D. 580, the bards became extremely insolent and corrupt, and their order a national grievance. They demanded the golden buckle and pin which fastened the robes on the royal breast; had there been a crown to demand, they would have asked it too: they lampooned the chief nobility; and, confiding in their numbers, amounting to one third of the men of Ireland,—a curious calculation—set the monarch at defiance. By the assistance of St. Columba, who was summoned from Scotland, the chief poets were rebuked, their numbers lessened, and the subjects for their muse pointed out by the careful finger of church and state. To the glory of Heaven, the honour of Ireland, the fame of its heroes, and the beauty of its women, they were directed to confine their musings.—But all such laws have been imagined in vain; for of the poetry of that age, when one third of the men were poets, we have as little as we have of the days of the first Milesians, when Cir Mac Cis and Onna Ceanfinn presided over the poetry of the north and the music of the south, eighteen hundred years before the coming of Christ.

I shall not attempt to trace the fall of Irish poetry, since I cannot say how far it fell, nor describe the share which Christianity is said to have had in its decline; nor try to allot to the Danes and the English their several shares in the great wreck of national song. But I very willingly leave the pages of romance and conjecture, and accept the aid of an Englishman and poet, in estimating the character of the Irish bards and their productions.

It seems to fluctuate between the thief and the patriot, between inflated prose and genuine poesy. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth, Spenser lived long in Ireland, and observed the country and the bards with a poet's eye; he has left us a valuable and a lively picture of an order of men, whom national vanity seeks to conceal beneath the splendid draperies of fiction :—

"There is amongst the Irish a certain kind of people called bards, which are to them instead of poets, whose profession is to set forth the praises or dispraises of men in their poems or rhymes; the which are had in so high regard and estimation amongst them, that none dare displease them, for fear to run into reproach through their offence, and to be made infamous in the mouths of all men: for their verses are taken up with a general applause, and usually sung at all feasts and meetings by certain other persons, whose proper function that is, who also receive for the same great rewards and reputation amongst them. They are, for the most part, so far from instructing young men in moral discipline, that they themselves do more deserve to be sharply disciplined; for they seldom use to choose unto themselves the doings of good men for the arguments of their poems; but whomsoever they find to be most licentious of life, most bold and lawless in his doings, most dangerous and desperate in all parts of disobedience and rebellious disposition, him they set up and glorify in their rhymes; him they praise to the people, and to young men make an example to follow. For being, as they all be, brought up idly, without awe of parents, without precepts of

masters, and without fear of offence; not being directed or employed in any course of life which may carry them to virtue, will easily be drawn to follow such as any may set before them: for a young mind cannot rest; if he be not still busied in some goodness, he will find himself such business as shall soon busy all about him. In which, if he shall find any to praise him, and to give him encouragement, as those bards and rhymers do for little reward, or the share of a stolen cow, then waxeth he most insolent, and half mad with the love of himself and his own lewd deeds. And as for words to set forth such lewdness, it is not hard for them to give a goodly and painted show thereunto, borrowed even from the praises as are proper to virtue itself; as of a most notorious thief and wicked outlaw, which had lived all his lifetime on spoils and robberies, one of their bards in his praise will say, that he was none of the idle milk-sops that was brought up by the fireside, but that most of his days he spent in arms and valiant enterprizes; that he did never eat his meat before he had won it with his sword; that he lay not all night slugging in a cabin under his mantle, but used commonly to keep others waking to defend their lives; and did light his candle at the flames of their houses to lead him in the darkness; that the day was his night and the night his day; that he loved not to be long wooing of wenches to yield to him, but where he came he took by force the spoil of other men's love, and left but lamentation to their lovers; that his music was not the harp nor lays of love, but the cries of people and clashing of armour; and,

finally, that he died not bewailed of many, but made many wail when he died, that dearly bought his death!

"I have caused divers of these poems to be translated unto me, that I might understand them; and surely they savoured of sweet wit and good invention, but skilled not of the goodly ornaments of poetry; yet were they sprinkled with some pretty flowers of their natural device, which gave good grace and comelieness unto them; the which it is a great pity to see so abused to the gracing of wickedness and vice, which with good usage would serve to adorn and beautify virtue."

Let me add to this some of the song of the poet of the O'Neil's of Clanna-boy, and the picture of the bard's person and description of his feelings are complete. He sings of the woes of Ireland, and sings like an eloquent barbarian:—"Our miseries were predicted a long time, in the change these strangers wrought in the face of the country. They have hemmed in our sporting lawns, the former theatres of our glory and virtue. They have wounded the earth, and they have disfigured with towers and ramparts those fair fields which nature bestowed for the support of the animal creation. The slaves of Ireland no longer recognize their common mother; she equally disowns us for her children: we both have lost our forms. Hapless land! the plunderer hath refitted you for his habitation, and we are now moulded for his purposes." When this is sobered down into ordinary language, it is nothing but the lament of a man that his country is become cultivated and enclosed, that houses are erected and castles built, and that he has no longer liberty to

range in his boundless woods, and feed his flocks by the mountain and the river. This honest effusion is the best answer to those who see in the old and rude institutions of Ireland the perfect works of a civilized and enlightened people, with whom flourished for thousands of years agriculture, architecture, sculpture, chivalry, and song. For the honour which follows the name of those who sang for the delight and instruction of the wise and the noble, let us examine the story of the last representative of the ancient bards, Turlough O'Carolan. He wandered up and down scattering music and song wherever he went, among rich and poor: he gave joy to others, but had always poverty to himself; and I have not heard that any of those in whose honour he sang, and who loved to talk of the glory of the bards of old, and of the generosity of the princes and nobles, gave him either mantles or milch cows. He died in the 68th year of his age, in 1738, and was buried at Kilronan, in the diocese of Ardagh. "His grave," says Walker, "is still known to his few surviving friends, and the neighbouring hinds; and his skull is distinguished from other skulls scattered promiscuously about the churchyard, by a perforation in the forehead, through which a small piece of riband is drawn." This is fame!

But Ireland can urge many real claims to eminence in song, without referring to imaginary epics, visionary tales, and ancient times of poetic glory, to which the most dauntless fancy cannot fix a date. It suits my present purpose to notice, that the northern parts of the island possess many songs, conceived in the peculiar

humour and fancy of the people; which, with a strong infusion of the spirit of the nation, bear a close resemblance to the Lowland songs of Scotland. It is evident, they have more of the Saxon than the Celtic feeling in them: yet they express the character of the country with much liveliness and graphic accuracy. In this will-o'-wisp excursion among woods and wilds with the bards of the sister land, I had hope of finding so fair a picture of their ancient state, that I could have held it up as an image of the former condition of the Scottish and English minstrels. But Truth wrote on water, and Romance wrote on stone. I sought history, and I found fable. Let me return to my native country, and examine the state of the minstrels of the north and south; and endeavour to delineate their character and condition, from sources more sure and accurate than what are presented by the historians of Ireland.

When Percy, with a poet's affection and a scholar's diligence, gathered together the many and curious evidences of the fame of the minstrels and the popularity of their songs, he expected a close and critical examination perhaps, but he could have no idea that a critic of learning and research would follow his steps to misinterpret his authorities, and mock the character which he had so beautifully drawn of this ancient class of men. It is not easy to imagine a liberal reason for Ritson's hostility. It was not love of truth, for he has wilfully closed his eyes on some important historical facts, and opened them wide to misinterpret others. It was not love of our ancient poesy, for to vilify the

authors of some of our sweetest compositions is to traduce the art itself; but it seems to have arisen from the mingled spirit of contradiction and envy, and from a resolute wish of exhibiting the rude and ungainly side of a subject which Percy had shown so stately and engaging. Nor was this at all difficult to do. He could come to the contest armed with royal edicts, opinions of nobles, and notices of historians, in which the minstrel art was degraded to the level of buffoonery, and its professors classed with the worthless and the base. But while he brought all this array against the respectability of the calling, he could not be insensible that in a thousand places in story and song, in edicts and in history, the minstrel was classed with the brave and the honourable; that he sang before princes and nobles; that his rewards were large, and his immunities worthy of his art and of an opulent and liberal country. This difference seems easily accounted for. A gifted and popular professor of the art of minstrelsy was as far removed above the condition of one who harped and sang to the mere multitude, as the martial song of Marmion is above the common chant of a metre ballad-maker; as transcendant in dignity and eminence, as Siddons is superior to the Lady Macbeth of a strolling actress in a country barn, with blankets for curtains and rustics for an audience.

Nothing can be more elegant, or, perhaps, more accurate, than the character of the minstrels. It is Percy who speaks.—"They were an order of men in the middle ages who united the arts of poetry and music, and sang verses to the harp of their own composing; who appear

to have accompanied their songs with mimicry and action, and to have practised such various means of diverting as were much admired in those rude times, and supplied the want of more refined entertainments; whom these arts rendered extremely popular and acceptable in this and all the neighbouring countries, where no high scene of festivity was esteemed complete that was not set off with the exercise of their talents; and where, so long as the spirit of chivalry subsisted, they were protected and caressed, because their songs tended to do honour to the ruling passion of the times, and to encourage and foment a martial spirit." In support of this character many authorities are collected, which give altogether a curious specimen of the manners and feelings of those unruly and martial times.

In the reign of King John, Ranulph Earl of Chester, marching into Wales with a slender retinue, was attacked by the Welsh, and constrained to seek shelter in his castle of Rothelan, where he was instantly besieged. This happened during the great fair of Chester; and Roger de Lacey, the constable, hearing of the earl's distress, collected a multitude of minstrels and players, and other persons whom the festivities of the season had gathered, and putting his son-in-law, Ralph Dutton, at their head, hastened them onwards to Rothelan. The Welsh, mistaking them for an army of disciplined veterans, dispersed, and the siege was raised. For this good service, Ranulph granted to Dutton and his descendants a peculiar patronage over minstrels, players, and other merry companions; and it appears, that as late as the

14th of Henry the Seventh, Laurence Dutton, Lord of Dutton, claimed, that all minstrels inhabiting or exercising their office within the county and city of Chester should appear before him or his steward on the feast of St. John yearly, and give him at the said feast four flagons of wine and one lance; and that every minstrel should pay him fourpence-halfpenny. When Edward the First went to the Holy Land, he was accompanied by a harper or minstrel; and this person seems to have been an inmate of the prince's tent; for when Edward was wounded by the Saracen, the harper rushed in, and beat out the assassin's brains with a tripod. The notice of historians, and the song of Gray, will perpetuate Edward's ferocity to the bards of Wales, whose influence over a rude and a martial people was in the way of his ambition; yet in his own court the minstrels appear to have been distinguished by royal favour. When, in 1306, he conferred the honour of knighthood on his son and on many of the young nobility, a multitude of minstrels were introduced, to kindle, by their music and their songs, an enthusiasm among the newly made knights, to induce them to make some military vow. This unwonted kindness of Edward to the professors of minstrelsy boded no good to the liberties of Scotland. The vow which they inspired in the king was, that he would take ample vengeance on Robert Bruce, for insulting God, the church, and himself; and having done that duty, would sheathe his sword against Christians, hasten to Palestine, and fight as long as he lived against the heathen. I know not what the vow of the knights

was, but that of young Edward is recorded. He would put himself at the head of the army, and not remain two nights in one place till he reached Scotland. A curious passage in Stow proves that minstrels were, like heralds, a privileged race, and that they could pass at pleasure into the royal presence. In 1316, while Edward the Second solemnized the feast of Pentecost in the great Hall of Westminster, and sat with all his peers around him, there entered a woman adorned like a minstrel, sitting on a great horse, trapped as minstrels then used, who rode round the tables showing pastime, then laid a letter before the king, saluted the presence, and departed. The letter was a remonstrance with his majesty concerning the favours he conferred on minions.

When Henry the Fifth embarked for the French wars, in 1415, he ordered his minstrels, fifteen in number, to attend him, to each of whom he gave an allowance of twelvepence a day: a liberal salary in those times. Though he provided, by his valour and heroism, one of the finest themes for poesy of any of our kings, such was his modesty that he would not allow, on his return to London, the helmet which he wore at Agincourt to be carried before him, for the people to see the dints and cuts which it had endured in the day of battle; nor would he allow any ditties to be made or sung by minstrels in honour of his victory, modestly ascribing the whole praise to God alone. But this did not proceed from any disregard for the professors of music and song; for next year at the feast of Pentecost, when the Emperor and the Duke of Holland were his guests, he or-

dered rich gowns for his minstrels, and to each of them he orally bequeathed one hundred shillings yearly, which his son caused to be paid out of the exchequer.

On a complaint made to Edward the Fourth, that various rude and incompetent persons had assumed the name and habit of the king's minstrels, and collected money in several parts of the kingdom, his majesty granted to Walter Haliday, marshal of his minstrels, and to seven of his brethren, a charter, which empowered them to examine the pretensions of all who affected to follow the minstrel profession, and to admit them to their rights and immunities, or to silence and punish them. Walter Haliday seems to have been a favourite minstrel during three reigns: I am willing to claim him as a minstrel of the "North Countrie," probably belonging to the ancient house of Haliday in Dumfriesshire. Alexander Carlyle, another of the minstrels, has also a name with a northern sound.

Such are the chief authorities on which Percy depends for support, in the history of minstrelsy and his character of its professors; and these seem so conclusive, as to place the fame and name of our old bards and musicians beyond the suspicions of criticism, and the cavils of antiquarians. To those, and they may be many, who are unwilling to bury themselves with Ritson among the rubbish of verse or history, I shall seek to express his doubts with clearness and brevity, and describe the means and manner by which he hoped to level with the ground the beautiful Gothic fabric raised, as the antiquarian imagined, by the enchantments of Percy.

"The critic commences by permitting France and Spain to enjoy the reputation which history gives them of a race of minstrels who united the genius of the poet with the skill of the musician, and went from bower to hall, singing to the noble and the far-descended of valour and of beauty. This was too well authenticated to be rashly disputed, nor did it suit his purpose to doubt the continental character of the minstrel; but he denies to England the pleasure of ever having heard, in her native tongue, the union of poetry and music from the lips and hands of her minstrels. He tells how the Norman minstrel Taillefer fell at the battle of Hastings, singing the ballad of Rollo—because he sang in a foreign language; and he is willing to admit that Richard the First was discovered in his captivity by the courage and skill of his minstrel—since the song which Blondel sang, and to which the king responded, is composed in French. But he believes and endeavours to prove, that the minstrels who composed songs and sang them to music at the English court were all foreigners, and their compositions in their native tongue; and that the real minstrel of England was a mere musician, who never conceived a verse nor sang a song to the sound of either harp or lute. He laughs,—and one cannot well forbear smiling,—at the ludicrous military array of those minstrels who marched from Chester fair along with their impure comrades, whom I am content to name "merrie companions" with the modest historian, to the relief of Earl Ranulph: but this only proves that in the reign of King John they were a numerous class of men, and that the exercise of their art,

whether of poetry or music, or both, was productive, since so many lived by it. If they sang, their songs would be the common language of the country; those who wish to please must endeavour to be understood.

If the Chester minstrels have left it doubtful whether they sang to please the multitude, or merely limited the pleasure they wished to give to their instruments alone, there can be no doubt that the minstrels, who assembled by the order of Edward the First, both sang and played. Music without language was too refined an instrument for such a politician as Edward. It seems but an imperfect teller of purposes; and the music which moved his nobles and knights had more of a human tongue in it than any mere sounds of our own times, if they could distinguish whether it urged them to a Scottish or a French war. Ritson appears to have felt this; and though he is very curious and scrupulous about proofs both in verse and prose when other men seek to establish any conclusive point, yet he is willing to be satisfied with mere assertion in aid of himself, when he declares that the existence of music and song by no means proves the minstrels to have been Englishmen. Now though it be true, that many national songs of this period were written in French, it is also true, that many were composed in the national language: the songs of Robin Hood were popular at this period, so were ballads in honour of Ranulph, the gallant Earl of Chester; and the disastrous wars between Scotland and England were the cause of songs on both sides of the Tweed, in the common speech of the country. We

know that the English language, about this period, acquired a harmony and a vigour fit for any purpose of heroic song. We know that it was widely spoken and commonly written, that it was the language of the nobles and the people, for foreign speech was confined to a few; and why should we conclude that the youths of England were moved on to an heroic enterprise in other language than their own? We are told, indeed, that Edward the Second took a carmelite friar with him, to sing of his exploits in Scotland; and that he paid a poet's ransom, by singing a Latin song in honour of the hero of Bannockburn. But though his song, such as it is, is written in Latin, it is only a proof of the taste of the friar; his was the failing of a far finer and later genius, George Buchanan; a failing common to many learned men, and by no means a proof that ladies' charm and knights' exploits were commonly commended in Latin. Were the minstrels of Henry the Fifth, Walter Haliday and Alexander Carlyle, foreigners? I am speaking of an age to which the genius of Chaucer and Barbour may be said to belong; and surely the language which they wrote is worthy of being measured out to any music that ever came from harp or lute. It has softness and grace equal to the expression of the most tender sentiments; and strength and nobleness equal to the description of the most adventurous and heroic deeds.

For the same purpose, and with the same wish to prove that no English minstrel ever united the arts of poetry and music, and sang verses to the harp of his own composing, Ritson descends step by step through va-

rious reigns to the days of Elizabeth; examining old chronicles, and scarce tracts, and obscure verses, with the most painful and inquisitive diligence. He collects many remarkable passages, where minstrels are described as mere musicians, and classed with the idle and the dissolute; but he abstains from touching on those authorities, and they are many, which through a long lapse of years give the minstrels song as well as melody. With the reign of Elizabeth, the glory or the shame of the minstrels terminates: their friends and their enemies alike agree that they are become unworthy of further notice, and have wholly fallen from that station which the chief professors of the art maintained in the courts of kings, and the castles of nobles, through a succession of centuries. The glossarists explain minstrels to mean musicians, but they explain it from the visible symbol of the profession, the instrument which they carried to assist them in song. Men would call the old poet so beautifully described in the introductory lines of "The Lay of the last Minstrel" a harper, since a harp is carried at his side; but the moment he commences the song which

> Was not framed for village churls,

he becomes a minstrel to the ear as well as to the eye, and a poet too; in spite of Sir Henry Spelman, and all other people who understood the direct but not the figurative meaning.

But no point which the ungenerous industry or the perverse pride of learning ever sought to establish has

been so completely demolished as this. Authorities, learned and unlearned, men who speak in the language of the country, and those who speak in that of a foreign land: the monk in his cell,—the poet in his song, the historian in his history, have been summoned from the dust of museums, and the dwelling-places of moths, to confound Ritson and all his imaginings. That minstrel means both bard and musician, no one may longer doubt; but it must be confessed the name of poet cannot, without outraging all charitable belief, extend itself over the unsummable multitudes, who wandered harp in hand about the country wearing the minstrel's cloak, and contributing to the amusement of the rabble. Some of the authorities are rare and entertaining. In the romance of Emraré, which from its obsolete style, nakedness of story, and poverty of incident, Percy supposes to rank next in age to Hornchild, we have—

I have heard minstrels sing yn sawe;

and in a poem by Adam Davie, author of some metrical visions as old as Edward the Second, we find this distich—

Merry it is in hall to hear the harp,
The minstrels sing, the jogelours carpe.

So also William of Nassyngton, who wrote soon after, says—

I will make no vain carping
Of deeds of arms, nor of amours,
As does minstrels and gestours;

That makes carping in many a place
Of Octaviene and Isumbrasse.

That the minstrels were singers as well as musicians these quotations sufficiently prove; and that they composed verses which they chanted or sang to the harp, there are proofs in abundance. In the romance of Emraré we find the following exhortation:—

Minstrels that walken fer and wide,
Here and there on every side,
In mony a diverse londe;
Should at her beginning
Speak of that righteous king
That made both sea and land.

In the ancient song of Guy and Colbrande, the minstrel speaks more openly:—

When meat and drink in great plentye,
Then lords and ladies still will be,
And sit and solace lythe;
Then it is time for me to speak
Of keen knights and kempes great,
Such carping for to kythe.

And Hollinshed, translating the prohibition of Henry the Fifth to his minstrels, on his return from Agincourt, that they should abstain from composing songs in honour of his success, says clearly that he would not permit any ditties to be made and sung by minstrels on his glorious victory: and we have proof enough that most of his min-

strels were Englishmen. It seems to me that Percy in the number of his authorities either overlooked or disregarded one of the most respectable and conclusive, inasmuch as it gives evidence of the music, of the song, and of the language. In the prologue to the Canterbury Tales, written about the year 1388, Chaucer confers all the attributes of a minstrel on his friar. I know not whether I am more pleased with the singular testimony which the passage yields to the description of Percy, or the happy and vigorous language of the father of English poesie.

His tippet was ay farsed ful of knives,
And pinnes for to given faire wives;
And certainly he had a merry note,
Wel could he singe and plaien on a rote;
Of yeddinges he bare utterly the pris.
His nekke was white as is the fleur-de-lis.
But he was like a maister or a pope,
Of double worsted was his semicope,
That round was as a belle out of the presse.
Somewhat he lisped, for his wantonesse
To make his English sweet upon his tongue;
And in his harping when that he hadde songe,
His eyen twinkled in his hed aright,
As donne the starres in a frosty night.

It is now time, and more than time, to leave the minstrels and bards of our sister lands in the obscurity into which the variable taste of mankind, and the universal diffusion of literature, by the pen and by the press,

had thrown them and their art; and inquire into the character and productions of those who belonged to Scotland. But in writing the story of the southern minstrelsy, we are telling the tale of the northern. It is the offspring of the same people, of the same taste, of the same feelings, of the same hardihood in martial adventures, with the like love for the strange and the superhuman. Our minstrels, like their brethren of the south, frequented the courts of our princes, the castles of our nobles, and the bowers of our ladies. They sang the same themes of valour and of beauty, of true history and wild romance, of domestic calamities, or of national welfare. They experienced, too, the same vicissitudes of fortune—pleased the ear of the princes and the pride of the people at one time: or suffered by their neglect, by their caprice, and by the cruelty of their edicts at another.

No longer courted and caressed,
High placed in hall a welcome guest,
He poured to lord and lady gay
The unpremeditated lay.
A wandering harper scorned and poor,
He begged his bread from door to door;
And tuned, to please a peasant's ear,
The harp a king had loved to hear.

A Stewart, a Douglas, a Seton, or a Gordon, listened to the minstrel and his song with as fond an ear, and rewarded him with as liberal a hand, as a Plantagenet, a Percy, or a Howard. But he found the hand that was ready to give was as prompt to punish; and the oral

poets and historians of the land had to bewail in the north as well as in the south, the rigorous justice or the hasty cruelty of their princes and nobles: nor was this to be wondered at, for the honour or dishonour of nobility and knighthood seemed so much at the mercy of an order of men, who had all the fierce passions common to genius, and who perhaps were sometimes more willing to signalize unpopular themes than pour out their songs according to the measure of their patrons' wishes, or the politics of the court. Or we may consider them desirous of rewarding in song the valour which protected their country, or the beauty which adorned it. But the poet who sang of the bravery of a Black Douglas would hurt the vanity of the Red; he who soothed the pride of a Scott would find a Kerr an ungrateful listener; what made a Home smile might make a Hamilton frown, and the verse which might extract a largesse from the hand of a Maxwell would bring the author a speedy blow from that of a Johnstone. The pride of one clan was in arms against the pride of another: district was jealous of the fame of district, and town of the reputation of town; while he who sang a partial or a party strain was sacrificed as animosities rose or subsided.

There were themes, nevertheless, for which the minstrels could ever find willing listeners: a military inroad upon England, or a romance steeped deep in the streams of ancient belief and popular superstition. The charms of a moonlight raid could only be equalled by those of an equestrian procession of the spiritual people with whom belief had tenanted vale and hill; and the clang

of the trumpet or the horn that summoned to battle was rivalled by the sound of the elfin-pipe, and the melody of the fairy minstrelsy. The storming of a rich town gave way to the description of the palace of fairyland; and the prospect of much booty, to that of seizing a charmed ring or an enchanted sword. A castle where warders paced, and where archers stood with their bows bent, was a less pleasant sight to a martial people than the palaces of polished steel, or the walls of burnished brass, which the wizard's skill promised of old for the glory of Scotland. A Wallace quelling a Red Reaver, or a Bruce slaying a Bohun, filled the minds of an imaginative people much less than the story of the Hero and the Spirit of Gaskhall; which I confess I never read while a boy without a shudder: or the tale of Michael Scott and his infernal steed, with its hoof lifted for the third stamp which was to sink Paris. If it were the pleasures of midnight booty, which charged the shield of one of our most illustrious families with the moon and stars; it was the influence of a romantic imagination, which added the savage warder and the mermaid for supporters. If the hand and dagger, and the bold "I dare," of the name of Kirkpatrick belong to the page of history, it was a mixed love of poetry and danger which added wings to the spur of the Johnstones.

Yet martial as the songs of the minstrels were, I am not prepared to say that they were conceived on the field of battle, and that, like the poets of the Normans, they chanted warlike songs as they rushed to the attack; or with a mixture of poetic fury and military glee marched

with harp and sword to death or glory, like the bards of the ancient Irish. Froissart, who has left us such a vivid picture of the army with which Randolph and Douglas foiled young King Edward at Stanhope Park, has nowhere alluded to any sounds more harmonious than the clamour of horns, and the shouting of the names of leaders. He was too much of a poet, too fond of the picturesque, and far too anxious and accurate an inquirer, to have left the poet and his art unnoticed, had a minstrel been in the camp. The dress of the minstrel, and the instrument with which he was encumbered, seem unfit for a rapid march, and all the changes of fortune pertaining to the military life. He who sang of valour might have failed in personating a hero; and the most inspired strain of poesy could not well augment the fury or the animosity with which nation at that time regarded nation. It was in a scene where the helmet and cuirass were laid aside for the velvet dress of peace, where princes sued and ladies presided, that the minstrel, with his harp and song, was to be found. When he was away from the ranks of war, he was to be sought as a minister of pleasure in such a court as that of James, on which Douglas refused to smile, and to which Lady Heron sang.

It is not necessary that I should seek for the period when the minstrelsy of Scotland was most famous, or to what source their romantic legends are to be ascribed. He who reads the introduction to the romance of Sir Tristram will find more curious learning illustrating the subject than would gratify the most avaricious an-

tiquary, and genius and skill enough to satisfy the greatest unbeliever in the northern antiquity of the oral art. I think the Scottish origin of the earliest British romance, composed in the native tongue, is sufficiently clear; and also the superiority of the language in which it is written over the first specimens that we have of the labours of the English muse: but I am not quite so satisfied of the Celtic origin of the romances which were showered so thickly over Scotland; though they have certainly caught a colouring from the traditions and beliefs of the original inhabitants. I may aptly enough compare them with the language of the land—the mixed offspring of the speech of various tribes and nations, but amid which the Gothic prevails; and which, like a river augmenting its waters with many lesser streams, gives an impress and character to the whole. If our romance, like a curious piece of cabinet-work, was inlaid with Celtic or Scandinavian materials, the groundwork was undoubtedly Saxon. All that gave strength and durability arose from the people whose numbers and whose language prevailed. The labour of the inquiry would be certain, and the reward unsure, if some more extensive research were made to ascertain if the Arabian or Moorish lore had any influence, through the crusades, upon the northern romances and superstitious beliefs. Limited as my own knowledge is, and the learning of all other nations lying to me in utter darkness, since I am acquainted with no other language than my own, I have often imagined, as I read the history of the Arabians, and had their manners, and customs, and love

of poetry, and romantic adventure, laid by the historian or the traveller before me, that in return for the valour and the folly which Europe formerly sent against them, they had exported some of their wild fictions, and their passion for the extravagant and the strange. Our northern warriors were not fonder of the sword-blades of Damascus than they were of the wild fictions with which eastern story abounds; and if the sight of the more perfect structures of the East for beauty or defence had some influence on the castles and towers of those crusaders who had the good fortune to return, may we not imagine that the romantic song of the north also profited by an infusion from its literature, though it had to be translated to be understood? Yet, after all, it is beyond doubt that the acts, true or fabulous, of the ancient people of the land, and the names of the British worthies, have given subjects to romantic poets over Europe; and that elaborate fiction has, while it preserved, almost overlaid the name of Arthur and his renowned companions. But the manner in which those fictions are told, the superstitions they involve, and the feelings they consecrate, evince more of Saxon than of Celtic character; and I contemplate them as Gothic stories, in spite of Celtic names of places and heroes.

The choice which Thomas of Erceldoune made was a Celtic subject—the language in which it is written is that of England. The period of the composition of his poem may be fixed, according as the reader's fancy chooses to please youth, or indulge age, in the luxury of

romance writing: his life did not extend to 1299, and we find him in high reputation for prescience at the time of Alexander's death in 1286; and if we may trust the dubious testimony of the minstrel Henry, he prophesied the future glory of the deliverer of Scotland, when he was thrown for dead out of the prison of Ayr about 1295. He has the fame of a prophet, and there can be no doubt that he was familiarly known by the name of the Rhymer; but there is no native proof that he was ever famed as a minstrel, in the strict rendering of the word. The author of the romance of Sir Perceval names him among those minstrels who had sung of the varied fortunes of Sir Tristram; and Gotfried von Strasburgh calls him a master of the art of romance. These authorities are conclusive with respect to the name he was recognised by in foreign lands; and there can be no doubt, from testimony, written as well as oral, that he was a person of some rank, and honoured with the acquaintance of the great and the gallant of the period in which he lived. Of the character of his poetry, and the nature of the language which he used, we have the evidence of Robert de Brunne, the annalist. The Englishman complains of the ambitious and ornate kind of language in which Sir Tristram is written, and of its difficult and complicated verse; which required such a succession of corresponding rhymes, as rendered it less easy to commit to memory than his own jingling couplets. If the complaint of the annalist be true, then the author of Sir Tristram was master of a richer, and a purer, and

more elegant language than was known in England when he wrote; if it be groundless, then the opinion of Ritson is incorrect, when he says, that the English had no language fit for the uses of poetry before the days of Chaucer.

As Thomas of Erceldoune is the oldest Scottish poet to whom history or tradition assigns the merit of composing in English, I must conclude that those minstrels who sang and suffered during the short reign of Macbeth were either a dynasty of Highland bards who composed in Erse, or that the English language was of far older standing in Scotland than is generally allowed. But I think the state of Scotland, at that period, resembled so entirely the condition of England, that the history of the one gives a distinct image of the other. When the first Edward rewarded the minstrels who harped and sang to his court, and punished the bards of the principality of Wales, he rewarded cautious loyalty while he gave treason its due. In like manner the minstrels at the Scottish court were ranked with knights and heralds, and were indulged with robes of silk,—a dress limited to persons who could spend a hundred pounds of land rent; while the bards of the Highlands were classed with fools and knaves, and ordered to seek some commendable livelihood, "on pain of being branded on the cheek, scourged with rods, or drawn like horse in the plough and harrows." Here I observe the sagacity of a prince, who rewarded those whose songs were in derision of his enemies, or in honour of loyal heroes of the land; while he punished and degraded the

bards of a vanquished and turbulent people, whose productions probably reminded them too often of their ancient independence, and who sang the achievements against the Saxon and the law of some of the more ferocious and desperate chieftains. Dr. Burney says the first Greek musicians were gods, the second heroes, the third bards, and the fourth beggars: it would be imprudent and unjust to claim celestial honours for our Caledonian bards; to the third and fourth honours of the Athenian scale we may safely aspire; and I gladly leave the Irish and the Welsh to divide the more lofty and less attainable honours between them.

When Gelimer, the vanquished King of the Vandals, implored from the clemency of his Roman conqueror a lyre, a spunge, and a loaf of bread, he is supposed to have asked a boon which he thought necessary for his pleasure, his comfort, and his existence. It was long since the monarch of Africa had tasted bread; a defluxion had fallen on his eyes, the effect of fatigue or incessant weeping; and he wished to solace the melancholy hours, by singing to the lyre the sad story of his own misfortunes. When Venantius Fortunatus assigns the lyre to the polished Romans, he resigns the harp to the hands of the barbarians; and the request of Gelimer would have been more national had he desired a harp instead of a lyre. But whatever instrument he asked for, the inference must be the same, that in seeking to unite music and poetry he sought a solace common to his nation; and in becoming the minstrel of his own misfortunes he gives an example to his Gothic descendants,

and bids us read the character of our ancestors in his affecting and singular story. The Welsh, the Irish, and the northern Scots, have all in their turns, though the children of another people, sung to the harp the story of their own misfortunes; and have sent from their woods, their mountains, and their morasses, a long and continued note of sorrow for their lost independence, the decay of their language, and the gradual disappearance from among the nations of their fame and their name. Their language has yielded, because the genius which supported it was unequal to the task of making it popular in literature; and as all their monuments of greatness were oral, their traces must in time disappear from the earth, —like the actor, who can leave no image of his genius behind.

When the earlier English poetry of Scotland was committed to the memories of the people, the pen had not been taught to come to the aid of the muse; its office was of a more holy, though not less poetical, nature; and in recording the legends and miracles of saints, and in tracing history hardly less fabulous, it was less worthily employed than in preserving the labours of an art which many of the pious deemed profane. If the church accounted minstrelsy heathenish, the laity would feel it expensive, if the swarms of its professors obtained from the generosity of the people food and raiment, such as was the reward of Henry the minstrel. It is not often indeed that minstrels are named in Scottish story, and they are not always mentioned with that respect which men ought to obtain who aspire to inspiration Yet to

them we must ascribe the early reputation which our country obtained for romantic poetry, the multitude of wild and singular traditional stories for which our border counties have been long famous, and that impress and stamp of chivalry which distinguish much of our lyric poetry. To this I may add, that they lived in a land from which romantic fiction sprang, where the chief heroes were born, and disciplined to arms and courtesy. Ettricke Forest was the wood beloved by Merlin, and he is buried at Drumelyier on Tweed, in the territories of Urien and Ywain. Galloway was the patrimony of Gawain, and the reputed scene of the adventures of Sir Grime and Sir Gray Steil. At Stowe, in the vale of Gala, near Melrose, we are assured by the historian that Arthur deposited a piece of the true cross; and tradition still points out the tomb of the beautiful Gunever, between Cupar and Forfar. Carlisle, at that period included in the kingdom or dependencies of Scotland, was the Carduel of romance, the favourite residence of Arthur; and between that city and Penrith is his "Round table," which, like his romantic "Seat," still preserves his memory. A thousand lesser traditions, conceived in the same curious spirit with the romances of the minstrels, might be mentioned as the local offspring of this genial soil; all combining to prove how long the impulse of poetic creation lasted and lingered, with all its attendant beliefs and superstitions, among the valleys and secluded houses of the border. I might quote a thousand authorities from verse and history, to prove the pre-eminence in ballad and

song of the minstrels of the "north countrie;" but I choose rather to establish this by the excellence of the collection which I wish to make than to claim honour for what may have perished, or suffered that change which all oral poetry has endured.

The "Rich Stronde," on which Marinell was thrown by Britomart, was not more thickly bestrewed

With pearls and precious stones of great assay,

than names, and lines, and fragments, of our ancient song, may be seen floating on the early waves of the tide of Scottish literature. From the day when Gawain Douglas wrote, till the time that Allan Ramsay collected, we find in many a strange and unexpected place the impression which the popular songs of Scotland made on the various spirits which the change, and faction, and civil animosities of those eventful times brought into action and popularity. The legends of the church had, for a while, begun to sink under the flood of coarse sarcasm, or ironical satire, which the poets, with Sir David Lindsay at their head, poured upon it; and the saints, or gods of stone or silver, forsook their niches for the hammer or the crucible of the Reformers, who despised and destroyed those gross and sensible symbols of the sinking religion. The awakened spirit of the land went abroad, and as the old religion had invested itself with all the outward signs and tokens of earthly power and splendour, the new and purer worship perhaps despised too much the association of the simple and comprehensible doctrine of Christ with the grandeur

of Gothic architecture, the imposing magnificence of dress; and, above all, the effective aid of devout instrumental music, which seizes so powerfully on the minds of an imaginative people. The ministers of the declining church had been long degenerating from that pure and lofty race of beings, whose stirring genius and active virtues gave life and renown to the churches of Asia and Europe. They slumbered in luxurious indolence, or sensual pleasure; and when the world began to emerge from the darkness of ignorance, they alone endeavoured to retard its rise, or sought to extinguish the day-dawn of liberty, learning, and useful knowledge. They had long fostered the ignorance and encouraged the pastimes of the vulgar; sanctioned profane representations of sacred plays, tolerated the personations of the divinest characters, and allowed and encouraged men to make familiar with the most awful symbols of heavenly joys, or everlasting punishment. In promoting this desire for shows, and plays, and pageants, half holy, half heathenish, they introduced the multitude to the secrets of monkish imposture, and taught them unwittingly to smile at their own legends; to doubt the influence of their saints of wood and stone, the efficacy of their relics, and to laugh outright at all prayers addressed elsewhere than to the God of the universe. With the decline or fall of the ancient church, I apprehend the fictions of romance fell into discredit also; and in Scotland, at least, the Reformation had the effect of quenching the flame of poetry, and of turning the genius which nature wished to consecrate to the muse to more popular or more lucrative

purposes. The genius of poesy, in the Gothic days of the church, delighted in gorgeous and splendid things, in processions of sacred persons, in deeds of chivalry, in actions which hovered on the limits of probability, and in the magnificent scenes of courts and camps, where all was addressed to the eye or to the ear. But the poetic genius which followed was of a more simple and severe character. The lyric muse assumed a meek and an austere look, sang only of holy or edifying things, and walked abroad with a sedate step, "with leaden eyes that love the ground," and without the licentious accompaniment of music.

To endeavour to ascertain how much of our popular lyric poetry has survived the Reformation would be a fruitless effort of patriotism; for all at that period, and long after, was floating in the wide sea of oral remembrance, and Allan Ramsay was the first who made a successful attempt to snatch a portion from oblivion. The multitude of names, and fragments of forgotten songs, which are scattered about the humorous poems of our two royal James's, in the exquisite introductions to the books of the Eneid by Gawain Douglas, and in those strange and singular productions, Cockelbey's Sow, and the Complaynt of Scotland, may well excite our sympathy for the lost favourites of our forefathers. But it may serve to lessen our regret to know that some of those songs were unusually licentious and indelicate. It has been my good or my bad fortune to retrieve several of those regretted worthies; and it has cost me a labour equal to original composition to recall

them back to something like modesty and discretion. I am not sure that I shall act prudently in pointing them out; the antiquary will regret the change of what is old into what is new, and the nice and the inquisitive will regard them with a suspicious eye, and imagine that under the outward garb of decency and decorum the evil spirit still remains—that I have not wholly succeeded in evoking the fiend of licentiousness.

Few songs of the days of the minstrels have perhaps reached us, none probably in the language and form of the time. Songs which descend from generation to generation are changed or amended according to the taste or caprice of the multitude, at whose mercy all oral things lie; and nothing seems so mutable as lyric poetry. During the long period when memory performed the functions of the press, many songs must have appeared, and made an impression on the public mind, till others more beautiful, or possessing more popular qualities, came, and consigned their predecessors to silence and to oblivion. There are instances where songs breathing a kindred sentiment, and expressing with more elegance and more point the same story of some of our elder lyrics, have succeeded in supplanting them in popular esteem, and in expelling them from our collections. Burns, who, of all poets that ever breathed, possessed the most happy tact of pouring his genius through all the meanderings of music, was unrivalled in the skill of brooding over the ruder conceptions of our old poets, and in warming them into grace and life. He could glide like dew into the fading bloom of departing song, and refresh it into beauty

and fragrance. To this rare and enviable skill we owe the renovation of many songs; and this was a talent which he possessed in common with many of the nameless bards of Caledonia. It was an usual practice to ingraft verses upon our ballads and songs, and censure or applause was added or withdrawn from the heroes of the story, according to the caprice or the attachments of those dispensers of fame, military and domestic. The song which praised the valour of a Douglas was, by the tongue of some Northumbrian songster, made to honour the name of Percy; and the ballad of Chevy Chace, in the lips of an Englishman or Scotsman, ascribed the honour of the victory to that side of the Tweed on which the person who sang it stood. A person once made it his boast, in my hearing, that he could sing Johnnie Cope with its nine variations.

But it is not from the pages of our poets and historians alone that we are made sensible of the loss of many ancient songs. To those who are well acquainted among the lowland cottages it need not be told, that an evening's converse can scarcely go by without some remnant of ancient song being quoted, or some allusion made to others which had been heard in youth, and had failed to reach old age. I have collected many curious scraps in this way, and learned many quaint saws and proverbial sayings which have eluded Ramsay and Kelly. A vigilant and a skilful collector—one who would enter into the peculiar feelings of a shrewd and a suspicious people, might find his reward in many curious and instructive things which still linger among our hills and vales. In

all the songs which are composed by the peasantry—I mean by people unpractised in the arts of poetical composition—and in most of those which have descended from the oral times, there is a visible laxity in the rhymes; no regard has been paid to the pleasure which the eye feels in surveying a succession of couplets with an exact correspondence of rhyme, and the fastidious nicety of Spenser is a thing unknown in northern verse. The rhymes of the more simple days of our ancestors never came before the eye, and any little irregularity of this kind was surmounted and melted into harmony by a skilful voice. From this defect to the eye, it has been imagined that a song might be composed without the fetters of rhyme; but the ear demands a similarity of sound, and in the rudest of our lyrical compositions this has not been forgotten; nor am I sure, if it were unnecessary, that a singer accustomed to expect the recurrence of equality of sound could dispense with what I call an useful beauty. It was not till printing brought poetry before the popular eye, as well as ear, that the nice delicacy of rhyme was regarded; and though we have gained something to the sight, we have won nothing for the other sense.

On the very threshold of the Reformation, when the hands of the reforming multitude were lifted to knock at our abbey doors, to demand a purer and more simple mode of worship, some of our most exquisite songs were heard among us for the first time; and the musical voice of Alexander Scot entered less into the national spirit of song than did that of our gifted and unfortunate James

the Fifth. It was perhaps unfortunate for Scot, that his songs were all committed to the custody of paper, and more so that the unhappy times in which he wrote prevented his productions from laying hold of the public mind to the extent they deserved. Had they been thrown among the multitude, like the earlier lyrics, they would have been softened in their progress, and their uncouth or obsolete words replaced with others more current and melodious. But print or writing has an external air of authority and truth, with which the provincial bards might feel unwilling to meddle, and any changes of the text would be restored by reference to the original work. With an oral song they felt no such scruples; it came without the sanction of printed authority, and every one attired the orphan in the dress which pleased his fancy. The songs which are ascribed to King James are remarkable for their sprightly gaiety, and seem stamped off by the same hand which gave us that admirable historic painting of rustic life, Christ's Kirk on the Green. No other poet has ever been named as a sharer in the fame which these native productions have brought to Scottish royalty; and though the poem has been awarded by some good judges to his ancestor, James the First, I think, in comparison with its prototype, Peblis to the Play, it seems the work of a later age. The latter struck the very note in which the Muse of mirth and humour, from James Stuart to Robert Burns, has continued to sing; and, as a work presenting the first comic delineation of rustic life and manners, it is invaluable. But in buoyant ease and animation it is

far excelled by the Christ's Kirk, a poem which, for graphic power, is perhaps yet unequalled. There is such a rapid felicity of expression, such matchless drollery, and uncontrollable humour, that to resist laughing outright is positive pain. The keeping, and truth, and variety of the characters, are all in the most natural style; and the words, like those which overflowed on the Muse of Burns, come rattling in their ranks—dropping into their proper places, the work of good fortune rather than of study. The royal author was the poet of the commons as well as their king; and to him and his illustrious ancestor we owe those strains of homely and heart-felt mirth, which have continued to flow through Ramsay, and Ferguson, and Burns.

I know not if this incomparable performance was current among the people, to whose tastes and feelings it is peculiarly addressed: long poems won their way slowly into common favour, at a time when the press had not added wings to the works of genius. But I remember purchasing it for a penny, with the spirited continuation of Allan Ramsay; and I lament that all those little cheap copies of our favourite works have vanished before the influence of a more fleeting literature. The disgraceful discomfiture at Solway-moss, which hastened the death of the accomplished author, was avenged by many satiric ballads and songs, which imputed corruption to the commanders, and held them up as objects of public hatred and detestation. We have an account of the pain which those compositions gave to the Earl of Glencairn, one of the Scottish leaders: none of them are

known to exist; they fulfilled the wishes of their authors, and then sank into oblivion, like all verses emanating from temporary topics, which have no claim on the ordinary feelings of the human heart. The Earl of Glencairn was himself a poet, and one of the most zealous of the reformers: he wrote some verses, called "The Hermit of Loretto," which were popular in days when men opened their lips, for the first time, in safety against the tenets of the ancient church. He sings a true story —of an holy enthusiast and a common cheat, who erected a shrine at Loretto in honour of the Virgin Mary, and set up his own daughter as an image of the mother of Christ. The young woman was of incomparable beauty, and her charms, which were freely displayed to the opulent pilgrims, attracted such crowds of suppliants, that the shrine became rich, and the priest renowned. Such was the subject on which Alexander Cunningham wrote, and it seems that the earl's rhyme excited no common surprise in John Knox—his wonder almost makes the labour of one, in whom the Presbyterian apostle saw none of the gifts and graces of learning, amount to a miracle.

I have already mentioned the Complaynt of Scotland, and the notice which it took of our ancient lyrics: the poem—for I cannot deny the name of poem to a work that is strictly poetical in matter, though not in manner—deserves very particular notice, inasmuch as it is one of our earliest specimens of pastoral taste and feeling, and gives us the names of many curious romances, now only known by their torn and bleeding members

scattered up and down, or by the fame which they have left behind them. In the sixth chapter of a work which extends to twenty, the author passed from his study to the green fields, to feel the freshness of the dewy grass, and the odour of the flowers. What he saw is best told in his own words: some passages are omitted, and the orthography is regulated by the present mode of spelling. "I beheld many hooded shepherds blowing their buckhorns and their corn-pipes, calling and convoying many fat flocks to be fed on the fields; then the shepherds put their sheep on banks and braes, and on dry hills, to get their pasture. Then I beheld the shepherds' wives and children, that brought their morning breakfast to the shepherds. Then, after their disjune, they began to talk of great merriness, that was right pleasant to be heard. The principal shepherd made an orison to all the rest of his companions." This orison is in praise of a pastoral life, and on the wonders of the heavens, the thunder, the lightning, and the rain. His wife "admonishes" him, as all wives will: "My well-beloved husband, I pray thee to desist from that tedious melancholy orison which surpasses thy genius, for it is not thy faculty to dispute on a profound matter which thy capacity cannot comprehend. Therefore, I think it best to recreate ourselves with joyous communing. And to begin such recreation, I think it best that every one of us tell a good tale or fable, to pass the time till evening." All the shepherds, with their wives and servants, were glad of this proposition; then the oldest shepherd began, and all the rest followed, in their several places.

The names of the stories and tales which the author heard are very curious; the stock of romantic productions, of a Gothic or classic origin, which our forefathers had to gladden the winter nights, was far from inconsiderable; some of them are still known and popular, for when will Chaucer and Barbour cease to be known? but the greater proportion have excited all the pleasure they will ever excite, and the critic may ponder over their names, and the poet imagine the nature of the strain, for memory has long abandoned them to fancy. "The tale of the Wolf of the World's End." "The tale of Ferrand, Earl of Flanders, who wedded the Devil." "The tale of the Red Giant with three Heads." "The tale of the Giants who ate living Men." "The tale of the three-footed Dog of Noroway." "The tale of the Four Sons of Aymon." "The tale of the Brig of the Mantribil." "Lancelot de Lac."

> Arthur Knight, he rode one night
> With gilded spur, and candle light.

"The tale of Floremond of Albany, who slew the Dragon by the Sea." "The tale of Sir Walter the bold Leslie." "The bold Braband," and "The tale of the Three Weird Sisters." Of all these tales, and many others, not one line is left. What a rich treat of romantic adventure, and Gothic magnificence and superstition, many of them promise! I have some suspicion that the tale of the Wolf of the World's End is a misprint for the Well of the World's End—a nursery tale it is true, but one of great beauty. The three-footed Dog of Norway, and

the Three Weird Sisters, have a wild and unworldly sound; and Sir Walter, the bold Leslie, may be the same who,

Between the Less-lea and the mair,

performed an exploit still remembered in tradition.

"When the shepherds had told all their pleasant stories, then they and their wives began to sing sweet melodious songs of natural music of the antiquite; the four mermaidens, who sang when Thetis was married on Mount Pelion, sang not so sweet as did those shepherds, who excelled them all in melodious music. The musician, who sang so dulcetly till the stones moved, and the sheep, and cattle, and fowls of the air, lifted their voices to sing with him; yet nevertheless his harmonious song surpassed not the sweet songs of the foresaid shepherds. Now will I rehearse some of the songs which I heard among them."

The lyrics which these rustics sang in this waking dream of Wedderburn or Inglis (for we are not sure to whose fancy we owe it) are supposed to have been popular in 1549, when the poem was published. We may conclude, at least, that they were favourites of the author; and we cannot well help surmising, that as they are mentioned in a work of fiction rather than history, some of them may be the invention of the poet. This remark will extend to those names of songs interwoven in the poems of the James's, and in Gawain Douglas; and as such references give an air of truth and reality to a work of imagination, I see no reason why we should

not ascribe the invention to those poets, since we know it has been liberally used in later days. What serves to strengthen this supposition is, that we look in vain through this curious catalogue for our romantic or military ballads: with the single exception of those which relate to "The Hunt of Cheviot," we have no notice of ballads and songs, which were certainly popular at that period; and this may be ascribed to two reasons: either that many of the songs noticed were the creation of the author, or that his taste directed him more to the choice of those which were coloured with classic lore, and were swelled with the names of Nymphs and Fauns, and Pan and Apollo, and the "Muses nine." It seems indeed probable, from the strong infusion of classic reference and story into his list of tales, and the other parts of his work, that he laughed at the rude but graphic strains of our native lyrics, and refused to be moved with the multitude at the chanting of Johnie Armstrong, or the Tale of True Thomas. It must be confessed, however, that many of those songs commence with lines of a very natural and simple sound; and we cannot suppose that lyrics beginning with "Still under the leaves green," "Cou thou me the rashes green," "Broom, broom on hill," "Turn thy sweet will to me," "My love's lying ill, send him joy, send him joy," could readily deviate into a less natural strain than that with which they started. If the author was too prone to—

> Lay his lugs in Pindus' spring,
> And invocate Apollo,

he sinned in common with many better and more original spirits.

In seeking to choose a song to express the character of our lyrics at this period, I am desirous of selecting "The Lusty May;" because it unites classical allusion with natural emotion, and is either a specimen of Wedderburn's taste, or a proof of his genius for such compositions, since it has much of his pastoral and descriptive spirit, and may be his own.

THE LUSTIE MAYE.

O lustie Maye, with Flora queen,
The balmy drops, from Phœbus sheen,
Prelucent beam before the day;
By thee Diana groweth green,
Through gladness of this lustie Maye.

Then Aurora, that is so bright
To woeful hearts, she casts great light,
Right pleasantly, before the day,
And shows and sheds forth of that light,
Through gladness of this lustie Maye.

Birds on their boughs, when buds have birth,
Send forth their notes, and make great mirth,
On banks that bloom, on every brae;
And fare and flee o'er fauld and firth,
Through gladness of this lustie Maye.

And lovers all that are in care,
To their ladies they do repair,

In fresh mornings before the day;
And are in mirth, ay mair and mair,
Through gladness of this lustie Maye.

Of all the sweet months of the year,
To mirthful Maye there is no peer,
Her glistering garments are so gay.
You lovers all make merry cheer,
Through gladness of this lustie Maye.

The spirit of love and chivalry was breathed very deeply over much of the poetry of this period; and though it is time to leave the shreds of antique songs, and relics of romance, and attend to the Reformation, which changed for a time the tone of our lyrics, and finally succeeded in impressing them with a purer character, I cannot resist the temptation of quoting Lindsay's description of the rich dress of the Lady of Carrickfergus, rescued by Squire Meldrum. It might be inserted in one of Chaucer's tales, or introduced into one of our best romances, it has so much of the true old Gothic richness about it.

Ane fairer woman than she was,
He had not seen in onie place.
Her kirtle was of scarlet red,
Of gold ane garlond on her head,
Decorit with enamelyne;
Belt and brooches of silver fyne,
Of yellow taftais was her sark,
Begaryit all with broidered work;

Right craftelie with gold and silk:
Then said that ladye white as milk.

The compliments which old Arbuthnot pays to female wit and beauty are worthy of any age, and with them I shall bid farewell to the poets of that time.

The properties perpend
Of every worldly wight,
Sae comely nane are kend,
As is a ladye bright.
Plesand in bed, lowesome and red,
Ane dainty day and night,
Ane halesume thing—ane hearts likinge,
Gif men would rule them right.

When God made all of nought,
He did this weel declare,
The last thing that he wrought,
It was ane woman fair.
In workes we see, the last to be,
Maist plesand and preclair,
Ane help to man God made her than,
What will ye I say mair?

There is nothing new beneath the sun. Burns must be content to share, with the grave Reformer and Principal of Aberdeen College, the fame of the happiest praise ever lavished on woman.

Auld nature swears, the lovely dears
Her noblest work she classes;
Her prentice han' she tried on man,
And then she made the lasses.

Devout men have not scrupled to ascribe to song much of the success of the Reformation; and there can be no doubt that the ironical lyrics, in praise of its modesty and purity, and the satiric songs, in open contempt and scorn of the idle ceremonies, and indecorous pretensions to miraculous gifts of the ministers of the ancient church, had a powerful influence over the public mind. When Knox advanced to demolish the whole structure, and Glencairn to break the hosts of saints in stone and metal, the former found the corner-stones already loosened by a profaner power than his own; and the earl, as he laid the merciless hammer of reform upon the other, found that a stronger spirit had been there before him, dispelling the charm of sanctity, and reducing the deified pieces of metal and stone to their ordinary and proper value. But songs have shared in all commotions and revolutions—they are the ready weapons of the learned and the rude—they have fought for the kirk, and they have fought against her—they have been made into the watchword and the war-cry of parties; a meaning beyond the meaning of their authors has been imputed to them; and we know they have had an effect which makes men marvel, who peruse those wonder-working rhymes, when time has sobered down the passions. We have seen how easily a republican song moved men, at a period when all minds were easily moved—the French revolution:—and we have also seen and heard, in a later day, the heroic welcome of the Bruce of Bannockburn, degraded from its office of inspiring sentiments of manly freedom and devotion in defence of our native land, into

the instrument of an illiterate faction of the meanest of mankind. But lyric poets have sung in favour of liberty, and they have sung against it; and the only honest songster I ever heard of was Skirving, who wrote "The Chevalier being void of fear:" for he laughed, and laughed loudly, at Jacobites and Georgites; and he got the reward of all men of the like ungainly integrity; he was plundered by the one, and in danger of being shot by the other.

We may learn from many sources that the mass of song which was popular before the Reformation had much grossness amid its animation, and indulged in sensual images, and spoke in a strain more familiar than virtue wished. The songs at which our ancestors smiled or laughed outright would cover their descendants with blushes; and the gentle hand of reform was as much wanted for our poetry as for our church, to render it fit to live in a more fastidious and critical, though not more virtuous age. It would be unjust to pretend that this age has more virtue, and unwise to suppose that it has a better taste, than the age which produced some of our brightest spirits. The songs which our great-grandmothers sang, we may suppose, gave them delight; and we are not to imagine that their delight came from a source less pure than our own. They were a simple people, who had not learned the art of attiring sensuality in a dainty dress, nor had they found it necessary to live like us in "decencies for ever." Yet I am no admirer of that primitive mode of expression which speaks bluntly out the hopes and wishes of the heart, nor am I sure

"that this direct and undisguised style is half so mischievous to innocence and youth as those strains which, like the angler's hook, hide their sting among painted plumes. It was a more honest method of wickedness, at least, and strewed no flowers over the snake which lay in watch for beauty. If our ancestors dispensed with an accurate and blameless style, we have not heard that they were ashamed of what we esteem to be indecorous; and the very freedom and fearlessness with which they wrote led them into aggressions against propriety which education and good sense will always observe. If the Reformation found our lyrics lewd or profane, it soon chastised or admonished them into a dulness which became doubly ludicrous, from the motley garb of irreverence and holiness which they were made to assume in the cause of the church.

I am half afraid to make the assertion, but the history of the decline and downfal of popery in other countries as well as Scotland will support me, that much of this leprosy of licentiousness which infected our poetry was caught when the Muse was doing the work of reform; nay, that it was caught in the very service of the reforming church. When the Muse first commenced her attack on the infirmities of the monks and nuns, she sharpened her satire, by contrasting the external holiness of their establishments with the internal indulgence and sensuality—the coldness without, with the warmth within—their imaginary abstinence with their real gluttony—and their pure looks and humble doctrine with their luxurious beds and unchaste intercourse. As early

as the days of Boccaccio, the licentiousness of the monks, and their tricks in the invention of profitable and curious relics, are made the themes of some of his unequalled tales; and Chaucer, before he was suspected of heresy, had obtained a sitting or two from some of the laxer members of the English church. The same spirit seems to have been loose for a long time in Scotland. Sometimes it is sly, insinuating, and ironical; at other times, it speaks frankly and familiarly out, and appears to pride itself in the simple way of going to work recommended by Burton—to call a spade a spade. One favourite theme, on which grave wit, as well as irony and humour, was employed, was auricular confession. A monk is described, in those satiric strains, round and smooth, and, like the indolent voluptuary of the poet, with "a roguish twinkle in his eye," listening in the solitude of his cell to a fair and simple maiden relating the wanderings of her heart;—or hearkening to the story of a less discreet, but no less desirable dame, resolved to take advantage of the influence which confession gave him. The indelicacy of his questions, the naïveté of the answers, and the pleasing penance which he imposed upon his fair transgressors, form altogether a very curious, but indecorous, dramatic scene. It would require some time, and some discretion of language, to describe the poems and songs, which, for a long while before the outburst of the Reformation, rendered the Catholic clergy odious in the eyes of the people—which left their processions without spectators, and their solemn masses without congregations. And it must be confessed that

satire and truth went hand in hand; for the congregations did not depart, till they could no longer with decency stay: if any think the multitude were too sensitive, let me remind them of the opinion of the provincial council of the Catholic church in 1549, which imputed heresy "to the corruption and profane lewdness of the clergy of almost every degree, and to their gross ignorance in all arts and sciences." Yet, with an inconsistency, which those who know human nature well may explain, they prohibited poems and songs that charged them with no immoralities more heinous than those of which they accused themselves, and threatened the authors and possessors of them with the vengeance of the church.

But this conquest, so glorious to the Muse and to mankind, was not achieved without pain and loss. The Muse had revelled so long amid scenes of luxurious grossness, that she was unable or unwilling to return to purity, when a purer song was desired. The company of "Ladye Sensualitye," and conversation with the "Seven deadlye Sinnes," had proved too strong for her morals. If the persons whom she so largely endowed with licentious speech were destitute of flesh and blood, and cold and allegorical, their language was the language of nature, and their words were too seductive to be resisted—even by those who were admonished by "Ladye Chastitie" and her sedate companion, "Gude Counsaill." For some time after the commencement of the Reformation, I can find no songs which display great symptoms of repentance. The Muse was long in returning to modesty of thought and decency of expression:

her services in the cause of religion were soon forgotten; her succours, though timely and perhaps effectual, came from a profane source; and the stern and anxious spirits who had perfected the work of Reformation were ashamed of the graceless weapons which had shared with them in the honour of vanquishing Antichrist. If poesy, however, was tardy in repentance, and slow in veiling immodesty of thought under more seductive decency of expression, it must be confessed she had leisure allowed to become virtuous; for the fathers of the reformed kirk of Scotland were less scrupulous in matters of poesy and amusement than their immediate successors or descendants.

When the clergy of the Catholic church permitted or encouraged the representation of plays, religious or licentious, on holidays, and on the Sabbath itself, they seemed not to be over-scrupulous in the selection of subjects. The legend of a saint, an exploit of chivalry, an outlaw's den, a story of neighbouring scandal, or a portion of gospel history, afforded in succession amusement, and sometimes perhaps instruction, to the motley audience. Robin Hood in Kendal green, with Maid Marian in her Lincoln kirtle, were followed by Adam and Eve naked, and unashamed as when fresh from Heaven's hand, and discoursing before ladies and lords about their state of innocence. It has been said that such spectacles exhibited the simplicity rather than the libertinism of the age, and that a prudish imagination is much easier alarmed than artless and unsuspecting innocence. But that innocence must have been of a very primitive kind

indeed that could feel no shame at such indecorous representations as this; and at a period when enthusiasm was as fervent, and innocence as common, those spectacles were expressly forbidden, and ample draperies, or garments of leaves, were interposed between the audience and those primitive ladies, those sensual allegories, which were summoned to the amusement of the multitude. The Reformation had been established, and the ancient worship overthrown, for a number of years, before the kirk of Scotland interfered with the representation of loose plays and curious moralities. The earliest care of the kirk extended no farther than to prevent the acting of plays upon the Sabbath day, and to direct the dramatic genius of the times, such as it was, to profaner subjects than scripture: this was in 1574. Two years afterwards, the assembly of the kirk refused permission "to the Bailie of Dumfermline to play on the Sunday afternoon a certain play which was not made upon the canonical parts of Scripture;" and in 1577, they beseeched the Regent, "that his grace would discharge the plays of Robin Hood, King of May, and such others, on the Sabbath day." Nor is there less moderation in the query of the synod concerning the punishment of persons who after admonition from the kirk frequented "May playes," more especially elders and deacons, and others who bore offices in the kirk. There is nothing either fanatical or austere in the answer, "They ought not to be admitted to the sacraments without satisfaction, in especial elders and deacons." The word satisfaction concealed perhaps a greater severity of discipline, and extent of rebuke,

than we associate with the word now; but it has a gentle sound in modern ears, and we may say with the poet, that such strictness was wholesome in the main.

In the ocean of trouble which overwhelmed Scotland much of her ancient spirit was lost, the chivalry of her nobility was nearly extinguished, her sovereign was against her or in bonds, and in the honourable desire of spiritual liberty she nearly became dependent on England. That she retained her independence, we may thank the rising spirit of her peasantry more than the honesty or the valour of her nobles. The time was at hand when the common people of Scotland, escaping from spiritual and personal vassalage, were to assert with success and honour their rights and immunities, and lay the foundation of their present character for intelligence, industry, and literature. But the convulsions of church and state were more favourable to independence, which is always produced in a storm, than to the growth of poetry, which is more the offspring of peace and domestic tranquillity. There can be no doubt, as the love of song is natural to the heart, that it was still dear to the people, but poesy languished beneath the austere or morose enthusiasm of some of our fondest reformers; and as many of our voluntary minstrels were silenced from a sense of the unholiness of rhyme, or from the admonitions of the kirk, minstrelsy became less popular than formerly. A severe and self-denying spirit was communicated to the majority of the people, and the Muse of simple and innocent song became wholly



mute, or breathed in secret her sweet and unwelcome strain.

Some of the pastors, who assisted in forming the primitive kirk, have been described as expressing reluctance in rebuking or in silencing an art, once a national and domestic enjoyment, and still dear from a thousand associations. They might feel afraid, that instead of hiding its light in the dark lantern of a learned language, or wasting its sweetness on cold and intractable religious allegories, the spirit of poesy would seek a profaner road to distinction—and if they thought so, it would seem they were not mistaken. The Muse, learned as well as rustic, seemed willing to divorce herself from all alliance with the kirk, and was anxious to regain her former influence over the mind of the multitude; and she made the attempt in strains equally pithy, sarcastic, and indecorous, as those with which, in her more popular days, she had braved and alarmed the church of Rome. In addressing herself to those who silenced the minstrel's instrument, and the poet's voice, she represents the interference of the elders and ministers in the domestic management of families as equalling auricular confession; she paints them with eyes which knew no tears, with hearts of stone, and features of iron. Nor did she confine herself wholly to satiric song: she remembered how deeply her dramatic attempts affected the church of Rome, and she tried the same sharp weapon; but she tried it with a feebler hand, and upon a less vulnerable body. If I may measure the grossness or the wit of those attempts by a dramatic song which

I recovered from tradition, I can imagine that they fairly rivalled the productions with which the ancient church was assailed, in impurity and humour. It is the confession of a sensual sinner before the kirk session, and the minister and his elders are ridiculed by the transgressor, as he gives "satisfaction," in a way singularly keen and pointed. I have been present when it was acted as a kind of interlude at a wedding. The rustic who performed it came in attired in sackcloth from neck to heel, a leathern belt girded his middle, while a quantity of long flax, falling over his temples from under a slouched hat, made him resemble the man in "Rome's Legacy to the Kirk of Scotland." The gray head of the transgressor, and the youthfulness of the sin, his ludicrous song, and still more ludicrous acting, the imaginary audience of grave ministers of religion, and the real audience of shepherds and ploughmen, who, like the humble hero of the song, were

Contented wi' little, and cantie wi' mair,

formed a scene well worthy of laughter. This description may recall to some of my south border friends the witty but irreverend ballad of "Auld Glenae."

The kirk, it would appear, hearkened at first to those scoffing and indecorous strains with carelessness or contempt. It was too surely founded in the feelings of the people to be easily shaken by the idle song of a vagrant minstrel; and perhaps the professors hoped that neglect might crush the folly of verse more effectually than kirk censure. But either the Muse became more insolent, or

the preachers less patient; or probably forsaking the courtesy of general satire, she lifted her voice against them by name, or lent her aid to swell the clamour of disturbance or rebellion. We have the authority of John Knox for relating that one Wilson, who neither could read the New Testament nor the Old, made a despiteful railing ballad against the preachers, for which he narrowly escaped hanging. The reformed kirk might be more pure than the Catholic church, but it was scarcely more meek in its prosperity; in times such as those the passions of men were up and inflamed: French cunning and English force—the ferocity of the old religion, and the fury of the new, made justice rare, and mercy scarce. In such tumultuous days, it is with much pleasure that I find one honest man, who had the boldness to sing a song creditable to a patriotic heart. When the "Congregation of the Lord," reinforced by the English army, opposed the army of the Queen Regent, in which was a considerable body of French commanded by Count de Martigues, and some severe skirmishes happened at Leith, a song, of which the following is an extract, was made and sung—I hope it had a response in many a Scottish bosom.

I have nae will to sing or dance,
For fear of England or of France,
God send them sorrow and mischance,
Is cause of their coming.
We are sae rewlit, rich and poor,
That we wot not where to be sure,

The border as the burrow-moor,
Where some perchance will hing.
And yet I think it best that we
Pluck up our hearts and merry be;
For though we would lie down and die,
It will help us nae thing.

An attempt of a more charitable kind was soon made to humble profane minstrelsy, and minstrelsy never stood in greater need of purification. As the kirk increased in austerity, the songs increased in licentiousness, and grew so grievously lewd, that pious persons imagined them to be rather the creations of the devil than the musings of man. Nay, in one instance, Belzebub was heard to chant one of his most graceless strains amid a conclave of witches; and with such wicked speed did this infernal lyric fly over the land, that scarcely two days elapsed ere all the young men and young women were singing it. Either the kirk had laboured to little purpose in lessening sin and in cultivating morality, or this supernatural song had a charm which a poet would gladly learn—that of catching and keeping attention. To go to a contest with the powers of darkness corresponded with the character of those times; and tradition makes a professor of religion array himself, and march to dubious warfare with a wicked spirit, in the same manner that a knight of old, with a spear in his hand, and his lady's glove in his helmet, rode to the encounter of a dragon or a sorcerer. In entering into competition in song with the powers of darkness or ungodliness, the

kirk had a twofold object—it would vanquish a dangerous, or at least a troublesome foe, and impress a character of decorum and religion on the popular lyrics of the land. For this purpose one or more of the inspired reformers undertook the singular and perilous task of enlisting profane airs into the service of religion, by uniting them to poetry of a purer and more devotional kind. The idea was excellent and practicable, but the way in which it was executed was absurd and ludicrous; the lyric powers of the preachers were unequal to their curious and important task—their songs were grave moralities, and their ballads dull sermons.

The wishes of the kirk were honestly set forth at the front of the work, and the title may help us to imagine the lyric cheer which was provided by Wedderburn for the youths and maidens of Scotland, in the year 1560. "Ane compendius Book of godly and spiritual Songs, collected out of sundrie parts of the scripture, with sundrie of other ballads changed out of profane songs, for avoiding of sin and harlotrey, with augmentation of sundrie good and godly ballads, not contained in the first edition." The prologue farther intimates the original purpose of the work, and it would seem when it first appeared that the reformation was incomplete. It was dedicated to the use of "Young persons, and such as are not exercised in scripture, who will sooner conceive the true word than when they hear it sung in Latin, which they understand not. But when they hear it sung, or sing it themselves in their native tongue, with sweet melody, then shall they love their God, and put

away bawdry and unclean songs." In the same spirit, and in continuation of the same warfare against unclean or profane song, William Geddes, minister of Wick, wrote the "Saint's Recreation," in 1683, a collection of spiritual songs, "suited," says the author, "to grave, sweet, and melodious tunes." He is as dull in spiritual song as any of his predecessors; yet he says some curious things in his preface, which assist us in estimating the character of our ancient lyrics. He supposes one of his readers to insinuate that some of these airs or tunes were popularly sung to "amorous sonnets;" and to this he answers, first, that he imitates certain pious and zealous divines, who to good purpose composed godly songs to profane airs, such as "The bonnie broom," "I'll never leave thee," and "We 'll all go pu' the heather." "And, secondly," says the divine, "it is alleged by some, and not without some colour of reason, that many of our airs or tunes are made by good angels, but the letter or lines of our songs by devils. We choose the part angelical, and leave the diabolical." Of these celestial lyrics, which were to interpose between the powers of darkness and their prey, and overthrow their poetical empire in the north, it is proper to give some account.

To substitute devout and religious songs in place of the witty, or profane, or pathetic verses, some of which were coeval with their airs, and all popular, required a poetic gift, which has been conferred on few, and a taste and tact akin to inspiration. No such powers were confided to our kirk minstrels—lyric poesy refused to appear under the kirk banners, and the reformation of

verse was found more laborious than the overthrow of popery. Amid all the unavailing attempts of the "gude and godly ballates" of Wedderburn to fan the fires of devotion into a brighter flame than those of worldly love, there is nothing which warms or elevates. In these religious parodies of profane song, the original purpose of the verse is never forgotten—the original meaning is never wholly subdued—there is still as much of the graceless old as enables it to prevail against the devout new. The effect of this kind of spiritualized sensuality upon ordinary and simple minds must have been instructive and curious. Acquainted as they were with the sensible and intelligible images of the profane song, can we think they would labour much to understand the allegorical instruction of the spiritual? To hear religion indulging in the current language of literal love with some fair maiden, trysting her out to a stolen and a twilight interview, and praising the darkness of her eyes, the beauty of her locks, and the ripeness of her lips, was far less likely to excite an ardour for the kirk than for the fair dames who frequented it. The peasantry to whom these devout meditations were more particularly addressed were somewhat dull in comprehending allegory, and unversed in the new art of spiritualization; and it was as easy, and perhaps more agreeable, to accept the joys which the song expressed in a literal way. From the religious songs of that and the succeeding ages, which live more in our curiosity than our esteem, I will endeavour to select some specimens.

That many of the songs, which the kirk lyrics were composed to supplant, abounded in lascivious wit and gross humour, we have satisfactory evidence; but I am far from sure that the sedate poet was always successful in supplying a purer and a better strain. The young and the joyous, who were alive to the power of association when they sung the following song, must have been possessed with presbyterianism beyond all example, if it failed to present to their minds any images but those of love and enjoyment. I may remark that the paraphrase is far too close: the new usurps the rhyme of the old; the lascivious dress is worn; and though the meaning is free from reproach, the sounds of the graceless and the good are so much alike as to deceive a careless listener—we know not which is devil, which is saint.

Who is at my window, who, who?
Go from my window, go, go.
Who calls there so like a stranger?
Go from my window, go, go.

Man, I gave thee not free will,
That thou should my gospel spill:
Thou does nae gude, but ever ill,
Therefore from my door thou go.

That will, alas! has me beguiled,
That will sae far has me defiled,
That will thy presence has me exiled,
In at thy door let me go.

To blame that will thou does not right,
I gave thee reason whereby thou might
Have known the day from the dark night
In at my door to go.

And were it fit to do again,
Rather as thou should lie in pain,
I would suffer mair in certaine,
That in at my door thou may go.

I ask nae thing of thee therefore,
But love for love to lie in store;
Give me thy heart, I ask no more,
And in at my door thou shalt go.

Who is at my window, who, who?
Go from my window, go, go.
Cry no more there like a stranger,
But in at my door thou go.

The first and last verses of this half spiritual and half amorous ditty are old; the dramatic cast of the lascivious song is imitated, and the importunate language of the lover and the yielding resolution of the lady are not concealed under a very thick veil of allegory. Nor is there better skill or greater delicacy in the attempt to reclaim another of these popular ditties: the gross and literal chorus, by the frequency of its recurrence, seems capable of poisoning the divinest verse; and here the

body of the song assists in strengthening the lewd sentiment of the old ditty, rather than in lessening it.

John, come kiss me now,
John, come kiss me now,
John, come kiss me by and by,
And make nae mair ado.

The Lord thy God I am,
That John does thee call:
John represents man
By grace celestial.

For John, Goddis grace it is,
Who list till expone the same:
O John, thou did amiss
When that thou lost this name.

My prophets call, my preachers cry
John, come kiss me now,
John, come kiss me by and by,
And make nae mair ado.

I know not where to find such a specimen of gross expression and devout meaning, mixed up with an attempt so singularly clumsy and unhappy, to expound an intractable allegory. In hearing this half converted lyric sung, the listener would be more apt to think of the sins from which it was meet he should be warned than of

the graver joys to which the reformed strain now sought to call him. To those who loved, and they must have been many, the old song of

He's low down, amang the broom,
That's waiting for me,

the new language which the pious poet caused it to utter would have a strange sound and a mixed meaning:

My love mourns for me, for me,
My love that mourns for me;
I am not kind, he's not in mind,
My love that mourns for me.

Though purified in the religious crucible, and stamped afresh in new language, and with a different meaning, such is the influence of association, that we still imagine we hear the interdicted strain; and we cannot help seeing the forbidden scenes of the old song rising before us. In such hands the profane airs of Scotland must have proved a very dubious auxiliary in the cause of purity and truth; and when religion called so anxiously for the aid of the lyric Muse, it is a reproach to the age that her call brought out no better and more inspired spirit than Wedderburn. Perhaps no period in our history presented such an opportunity to a poet of acquiring lasting renown. A purer and a nobler strain would have been welcomed by the professors of religion, and by the community at large: an age that could tolerate or applaud

the rude and fanatic verses of the kirk minstrels was avaricious of poetry.

But if the authors of these spiritual songs failed in overcoming the popularity of the unclean verses—if they did not wholly succeed in making the tongue of devotion talk more sweetly than the lips of worldly-love—if they rendered the spiritual conversation between "the flesche" and "the spirit" the dullest of all controversies, they did not altogether fail in their wish to overwhelm with scorn and loathing the contemporary church of Rome. The spirits of the age had been disciplined more for this sharp and perilous work than

> For capering nimbly in a lady's chamber,
> To the lascivious pleasing of a lute,

or even freezing woman into a spiritual allegory for the edification of the multitude. But in the contempt for masses, crosses, confessions, beads, and pastoral crooks, they sometimes forgot they were singing for the improvement of poesie; and in their descriptions of the scarlet lady and her monks and hand-maidens, they neglected the morality of their flocks. It is hard to disbelieve an author's own averment; but when he says he is singing a devout ballad, he is only entitled to belief if his strain correspond with his assertion: and it is scarcely credible that a work dedicated to delicacy and holiness could relapse into descriptions worthy of the lax minstrels whose lewd songs were so properly condemned; yet I know not where to seek for scenes of greater lasciviousness than

some of these spiritual ballads contain, and in passages too where there is no desire to hide the meaning under the thick or transparent veil of metaphor or allegory. Those who think me severe, and who are unacquainted with the slumbering songs of our ancestors, I may refer to a very lively but a very lewd ballad, of which the following is rather a modest specimen.

The Sisters gray, before this day,
  Did croon within their closter;
They feed ane Freir their keys to bear,
  The fiend receive the foster.
Syne in the mirk he weill could wirk,
  And kittle them wantonlie:
Haye trix! trim go trix
  Under the greenwood tree.

I might also refer them to others equally indelicate. In their love of exposing impurities they forgot that their exordium was holiness and chastity, and that they had undertaken to compose songs which men could sing without shame, and women without blushing. Their satire was coarse, vigorous, and effectual; and they had some skill in exposing the infirmities of the friars and nuns: yet I am not certain that Wedderburn ever sang aught so sharp as John Wickliffe said two hundred years before. "The priests don not well their godly office, but live in covetousness and gluttony, drunkenness and lechery, with fair horse and jolly and gay

saddles and bridles ringing by the way, and themselves in costly cloths and pelure, while their poor neighbours perish for hunger and cold."—Wedderburn has sometimes aspired to equal the animated pictures of our great reformers, and he gives the church of Rome some "Apostolic blows and knocks."

Sum make gods of sticks and stanes,
Sum make gods of sainctis banes.

There is considerable freedom and strength in the ballad in derision of mass; and the following allusion to the great point of human controversy, the real presence, may seem blasphemy to some, and sharp good wit to others.

Gif God was made of bits of bread,
Eat ye not weekly sax or seven,
As it had been ane mortal feed,
While ye had almost herried heaven?
Als monie devils ye maun devour
Till hell grows less,
Or doubtless we daur not restore
You to your mess.
Gif God be transubstantiall
In bread, with hoc est corpus meum,
Why are ye so unnatural
As take him in your teeth and slay him?

There is some happiness of personification in the following verse, and those with mitres on their heads, and

those with mitres in their heads, would do well to read it and think of it.

Ye parted with dame Poverty,
Took Property to be your wife;
From Charity and Chastity,
With Lechery ye led your life;
Which raised the mother of mischief,
Your greediness,
Believing aye to get relief
For saying mess.

Before I take farewell of these spiritual allegories and lyrical satires, and seek out the Muse of Song when she had escaped from the impurities of one church and the injustice of another, and resumed her own sweet and natural and unbidden strain, let me say something of the new impulse which the Reformation gave to genius, and the change which it wrought in the beliefs and the joys and the feelings of our ancestors. The wild and variable fictions of romance; the legends of the church swollen into interminable histories of miracles and wonders which prayer and mortification had wrought; and the representation of dramatic stories, where satyrs, and devils, and angels, and souls of men, were called up for the instruction or the laughter of the audience, all vanished away before a religion which limited its belief to things recorded only in holy writ. The world, indeed, might well be weary of the eternal monotony of romances and spiritual legends, and sensual moralities; and to free

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itself from their incumbrance, and seek for instruction and rational amusement, required an effort such as Scotland made when she threw down the splendid fabrics which vanity, or superstition, or repentance, had been so long in rearing, and discharged the flocks of friars and religious devotees from the luxury of soft and agreeable penance, the dreams of indolence, the monotony of idle processions and barren ceremonies, and the pleasure of holding the people in subjection and the princes in awe. But Scotland was not allowed to reap the harvest which she sowed; wars followed on wars, struggle succeeded struggle for civil or religious liberty; and her long contention with the churches of Rome and England stamped an outward sternness upon her which was long in being softened. We are not, however, to estimate the influence which the Reformation had upon the Scottish mind and upon Scottish song by the spiritual ditties of the divines, nor by the contentious sermons and controversial histories of the elder worthies of the kirk. There were other and gentler spirits, who, escaping from the bitterness of party rancour, sought to expatiate in secret upon meek, and rural, and domestic things; and, in the midst of sore trials and national calamity, gave an example of purity of sentiment, tenderness of heart, and richness of fancy, worthy of better times and a higher fame. I allude to the poems of Alexander Hume, parson of Logie, to the allegorical poem of Alexander Montgomery, and to some others of inferior merit, which breathe the same piety and purity, inspired ardour of sentiment, and description. It is in the "Thanks for a Summer's Day"

of the first, and in the "Cherry and the Slae" of the second, that we are to look for and find those redeeming graces which Wedderburn sought in vain to infuse into the iniquitous strains of the wandering minstrels. I am sorry that the former, who seems to have had some of the best qualities of the popular Muse about him, refrained from lyric composition; and I also wonder how his "Summer's Day," during the rage for singing songs of immeasurable length, escaped being sung. That the "Cherry and the Slae" was sung, we have sufficient evidence; but our ancestors had fewer pleasures than their descendants, and listened to a long narrative, or a moral strain, with a patience very unlike that of the volatile audiences which gather to applaud or damn a poet's performance now. I cannot well refrain from speaking of Hume, nor can I easily resist quoting his "Summer's Day," from which I have received so much pleasure, and in which I am willing to believe I see the first dawn of the great national, descriptive, and moral poem of Thomson. To Hume, and to such as Hume, I feel more desire to attribute the change which was wrought in the external decorum and inward chastity of our national songs, than to the mortification and ridicule to which they were exposed by the strange transmutations they suffered in the "good and godly ballates." The impurities of song were overlaid rather than amended by cumbrous spiritualization and leaden allegory; and if our future poetry attached itself more to the blissful and balmy side of human nature, expressed a meekness in its joy and a quieter transport

in its love, a modesty and a reverence in its humour, and a gravity amidst its extravagance, we may seek for the cause rather in the example which was set than in the rebuke or persecution which was suffered.

It may startle some, and offend others, that I impute part of the reformation wrought upon our lyrics to the translation of Scripture and the version of the Psalms. When the sacred word was unsealed to the multitude, the peasantry of Scotland, a poetical and imaginative people, dwelling among the mountains, and watching their flocks amid scenery not much unlike that of Palestine, must have felt very strongly the pastoral beauty, and simple grace, and chaste elegance of many of the psalms of David, and the Song of his Son. They would read a lesson there how inviting nature and truth may be made with perfect innocence; and how much female loveliness was increased by the welcome absence of impure thought or indecorous expression. I shall be told of the unmelodious and unpoetical version of the rhymed psalms; but who will make a better? and, above all, who will make a work which may dismiss those simple compositions from memory and from reverence, and supply their place? More elegance and more melody might be brought to the task, but who will bring the fame of two hundred years? and who will bring that antique simplicity now sanctified as scriptural? In Scotland the psalms have been long popular; they are committed to the care of early memory before we learn to square our affections by the rules of critics, and they continue with us through life endeared by many recol-

lections. Delight may combine with duty in this; but it requires not the impulse of duty to learn many of the psalms. The eighth psalm, with almost a total absence of rhyme in some of the verses, and with some imperfection in its harmony, and some embarrassment in its sentiment, is one of the most beautiful poems in the language.

It was somewhere about the year 1540 that the Psalms were rendered fit for the accompaniment of music, by the protestants of Flanders; and it was in 1555 that Knox returned from Geneva, impressed with the purity and propriety of Calvin's institutions, and resolved to confer them on Scotland. At this time the psalms of Clement Marot and his friend Theodore Beza were separated from the profane ballad-airs to which they were currently sung, and fitted with solemn music to accompany the catechism of Geneva. That Knox and his fellow-labourers in reform introduced the love of psalmody into the Scottish kirk, there can be little doubt: and far more successful than the author of the spiritual ballads, the translators of our version succeeded in their object, if their wish was popularity. Those who may desire to know something of the poet whose version of the psalms gave as great an impulse to poetry as to the Reformation, will read with pleasure not unmingled with pain the following account of Clement Marot.

"Among the grooms of the bedchamber to Francis the First of France was one Clement Marot, born at Daneau, a man naturally eloquent, of a voluble fluent tongue, having a rare vein in French poetry, wherewith

the king was much taken, who kept him as a choice instrument of his learned pleasures. But as his wit was something better than his conditions, by his acquaintance with the Lutherans he was suspected of having changed his religion; and therefore, fearing the king would be offended, he fled to his majesty's sister at Bearn, the old sanctuary for delinquents. Awhile after the king was pacified, and he returned to Paris, where he was advised by his friend, Francis Vatable, the Hebrew lecturer, to leave the trifling subjects he wrote upon, and study divine poesie. Hereupon he began to translate the Hebrew prophet into French stanzas, but so ignorantly and perversely, as a man altogether unlearned, that the king, though he often sung his verses, yet, upon the just complaints of the Sorbonne doctors and their severe censure passed against them, commanded that nothing of Marot's in that kind should be from thenceforth published. But being forbid by proclamation, as it often happens, the longing of the reader and the fame of the work were increased; so that new tunes were set to Marot's rhymes, and they were sung like profane ballads. He in the meantime growing bold by the people's applauses and not able to forbear bragging, for fear of punishment fled to Geneva, and flying from thence for new crimes committed, but first having been well whipt for them, he died at Austune. The success of this translation moved Theodore Beza, a friend of Marot, who wrote an elegy upon his death, to join to the fifty which he had printed the other hundred in French metre too; so the whole book of David's Psalms

was finished. And to make it pleasing to the people, they had several tunes set to them by eminent composers that chimed so sweetly, that every one desired to have the new psalter. But many errors being detected in it against religion, and the work therefore prohibited—as well because the verses of the prophet were published in a vulgar tongue by profane persons, as that they were, *dolo malo*, bound up with Calvin's catechism at Geneva—these singing psalms, though abhorred and slighted by the Catholics, remained in high esteem with the heretics; and the custom of singing Geneva psalms in public meetings, and on the highway, and in shops, was thenceforth taken for the distinctive sign of a sectary."

Such is the account of one who, with no friendly voice to heretical poetry, acknowledges its popularity and its effect on the multitude. When it moved other nations, are we to suppose that it left our own unmoved? If song is the natural voice of the heart and of the fancy, we may suppose sacred song to be the first fruits of religion, the earliest praise-offering of the heart and mind. The scriptures, whether in the poetic prose of the prophets or in the rhymed translations of our own worthies, have impressed a peculiar stamp upon the Scottish feeling and character, which is abundantly visible in conversation and in song. In matters of allusion and illustration, in the colour and pressure of thought, in dramatic detail and graphic simplicity, the poetry and the prose of Scotland have largely profited; and though we have departed a little from this more primitive and ex-

pressive style, in quest of a more pointed elegance and greater courtliness of phrase, we have gained less in grace than we have lost in strength, and spirit, and truth. It has even been made a matter of reproach to Scotland, that the wit or humour of her sons, whether within the limits of strict decorum or in the debateable land between modesty and licentiousness, is all alike more or less tinctured with scriptural learning or reference. I mention this, not from a conviction of its truth, because I believe a Scotchman abuses a devout education in this way as little as any one; but rather for the purpose of showing that manner has been mistaken for matter. In the slow speech and melodious utterance of the people of the lowlands, others have distinguished, or imagined they distinguished, the descendants and scholars of a nation of preachers, poets, and enthusiasts.

The character and condition of our peasantry were equally favourable for receiving and perpetuating the change which the reformation wrought; and the scripture, which the wisdom of man opened for the first time to their eyes, presented, among its descriptions of patriarchal establishments, a distinct image of their own. Portioners and farmers lived in something of a patriarchal state at the head of their various and numerous households; and the shearing of their sheep, the watching of their flocks, the cultivation of the ground, the rapid rivers, the steep green hills, the alternate changes from hill to dale, from corn to grass, all contributed to assimilate the songs or scenes of scripture with the place

of their birth. This life of pastoral, and, if you will, of rustic ease, afforded much leisure for music and for verse. The shepherd on his hill, the maiden milking her ewes, or pressing the white curd with as white a hand, the mountains covered with sheep, the valleys patched with corn, the change of season, and the pleasures of the winter evening, the song, the mirth, and the dance, were all circumstances more favourable for poesie than the noisy toil of the mechanic, the din of the anvil, the rattle of the loom, or the mason's hammer and the dusty stone. "The vacant shepherd piping in the dale," whom the poet saw in the vision of Indolence, was every where seen; while a maiden responded to his music in a strain which belonged to his heart, and was perhaps his own composition. Commerce, before which I am afraid the simplicity of man as well as his mirth, his music, and his song, have ever flown, penetrated but partially into the pastoral recesses of the border: the haunts of the Muse were long unprofaned by the introduction of manufactures; the streams were shallow and the mountains rough; and man had not condescended to become a mere engine, and to ruin his health to make gold for others. The hind built his own house, and exchanged his own pastoral wealth for the productions of the town, while his wife or his daughter spun or bleached or sewed; and the pride of the one was to be supereminent in the management of his flocks, and of the other to be unrivalled in domestic economy, to wear the finest home-made mantle, and bleach the fairest linen on the rivulet bank. The martial shepherds of the border, after the

accession of James, laid aside their coats of mail and hung up their spears, and gradually subsided into a quiet and industrious people. With their warlike occupation the warlike spirit of their ballads also departed; and the devout and moral character of the people, called into poetic action by the presence of long absent repose, was breathed out in strains of wedded joy and youthful love equally pure and affectionate. Nor have I drawn an ideal picture: a fireside like that which I have briefly sketched may still be found remote from towns, and hid among the bosoms of the inland hills, presenting at once an image of opulence and originality akin to the domestic painting of Hugh Latimer. "My father was a yeoman, and had lands of his own, only he had a farm of three or four pounds by year at uttermost; and hereupon he tilled as much as kept half a dozen men. He had a walk for a hundred sheep, and my mother milked thirty kine. He was able, and did find the king a harness with himself and his horse, while he came to the place that he should receive the king's wages. He kept me at school, else I had not been able to preach before the king's majesty now. He married my sisters with five pound, or twenty nobles, apiece; so that he brought them up in godliness and fear of God. He kept hospitality for his poor neighbours, and some alms he gave to the poor, and all he did of the said farm."

Much has been said of the share which the beauteous person and fine talents of queen Mary had in inspiring verse; but I have yet to learn from tradition or from history that the charms of her person or the accom-

plishments of her mind gave rise to any thing better than unhappy strife and civil and religious commotion. Her short and stormy reign was injurious to her native land; her youth and her beauty conspired against her peace, and the moments of her life were numbered by sorrow, by shame, and the bitterness of captivity. Her return from France to Scotland was welcomed by two parties, who in their turns subjected their country to the intrusion of English and French mercenaries; and perhaps the only people who welcomed her cordially were the vagrant musicians and minstrels, who saluted her with the sound of fiddle and rebec as she passed along the streets of Edinburgh. The courtly Brantome speaks of these pedestrian musicians or minstrels with the contempt with which a Frenchman regards all nations save his own; but John Knox calls them a company of most honest men, who with instruments of music gave their salutations at her chamber-window. "The melody," as she alleged, "liked her well, and she willed the same might be continued some nights after with great diligence." A beauty, a poetess, and a queen, she returned to her country amid cruel discord—amid the rancour of religious strife, of all strifes the most deadly, augmented by Catholic artifice and the treachery and cunning of her more powerful rival and sister queen, Elizabeth. Her own follies, the follies of her subjects, and the perfidy of those in whom she trusted, alike demand and obtain our sorrow and our hate. Neither her loveliness, nor the desolate situation in which she stood, inspired a strain which was worthy to live, or armed in her defence a man

who had courage or virtue equal to her protection." If the Muse raised her voice in her praise or her defence, it must have been as feeble and ineffectual as the hands and swords of the Hamiltons at Langside. Much has been written in Mary's praise, and much has been written against her.—I am not sure that she was any worse or any better than the times in which she lived: those who wish to think her pure will require great dexterity of argument and an array of proof such as has never yet been exhibited; and those who desire to hold her up to loathing and contempt would be wise to say nothing of the virgin queen and the wishes she expressed to Sir Amias Powlet or Sir Drue Drury; nor to mention the holy perfidy which forged the letters and sonnets, and published them in her name.

If I distrust the accusations of her enemies, can I confide in the eulogiums of her friends? They differ in all other things and agree but in this, that Mary was of beauty transcending all living beauty, and of genius nearly rivalling her personal charms. Of these there can be no doubt; and if there were, it is now too late to express it. The fame of her beauty, like the story of her misfortunes, has been diffused over the world by tradition, by history, by the painter's hand, and Elizabeth's unwilling tongue; and he who seeks to lessen it is only an object for laughter. Her beauty seems to me of a peculiar character—an exquisite union of thought and form, resembling nothing in painting or sculpture.—I am willing to believe I see in her face the character of the daughters of Scotland, expressed

only with a rarer happiness and regularity. Her genius is much more questionable than her loveliness: her education, half Scottish, half French, was unfriendly to the growth of aught original and vivid—she would lose the free native force of her own tongue, and never wholly attain that of France. The unhappy religious dissensions which beset her on all sides, and finally overwhelmed her, were unfavourable to the unfolding of genius, which, sensitive as a flower, is shut with the storm and opens with the sunshine. Religious discord and religious hate froze up men's hearts, and the heroes of the days of Robert Bruce and his descendant, Mary Stuart, seem different races of people. The hand that opened the doors of heaven seemed to have closed those of happiness, and benevolence, and mercy—the sword and the sermon united against her—and highly gifted as she certainly was, could we expect her to show her taste or her fancy amid civil broil and the torture of long imprisonment? The thrush sings not under the shadow of the raven's wing. Her beauty was her great enemy; her wit led her to the scaffold; and such was the influence of religious hate, that the Scottish nobles looked silently on while her blood was unjustly spilt, and one, only one, had the courage to draw his sword, and say, "That is my answer to England." Joseph Ritson, who was not much under the influence of romantic feeling, and who seldom expressed sorrow beyond the narrow circle in which as a mere antiquarian he had allowed his spirit to be spell-bound, seems nearly moved to tears with the beauty, and genius, and mis-

fortunes of Mary. "Her testament and letters," he observes, "which the writer of these pages has seen, blotted with her tears, in the Scots' College, Paris, will remain perpetual monuments of singular abilities, tenderness, and affection—of a head and heart, in short, of which no other queen in the world was probably ever possessed." The lyric genius which Brantome ascribes to her is concealed from me in the language of France, and in any translations which I have consulted much of the native sweetness, and grace, and unsolicited ease of expression which the originals possessed, has evaporated. A song is like a flower in full bloom, which cannot well be transplanted without diminishing its beauty and impairing its fragrance.

I have already noticed the change which the Reformation sought to produce and partly succeeded in effecting in the purity of song. The accession of the Stuarts to the throne of England, by bringing peace and security to the land of poetry, changed the note of the trumpet into the breathings of the pipe, and substituted the domestic for the martial spirit of our lyrics. It was this sudden transformation of the sword into the ploughshare, of the spear into the shepherd's staff, which probably let loose a pastoral flood over the land, and filled our songs with strange and affected names, and steeped our moorland landscapes in Arcadian dews. Many of the strains of our scholars and our professed authors want the sharp original stamp which native genius takes at first hand from nature; and possessed more with the Muse of Italy or Greece than of Scotland, they sought to brighten our

suns and soften down our landscapes till they rivalled those of other climes. Through the influence of learning, and the decrease, or rather extinction, of chivalry, poetry became more or less the pursuit of many of those who desired to be thought elegant or accomplished: the offspring of the heart was succeeded by the offspring of the head; and printing, unloosing the seals which ignorance had placed on the literature of other nations, presented a readier way of finding images and thoughts than seeking them in the bosoms of nature and of man. The spirit of learning and of trade came more and more into literature; and the inspiration of which the heathen poets boasted, inasmuch as they sang from the impulse of nature and the fulness of the heart, descended on few. They were not all prophets who imagined they prophesied; nor did the Muse, perhaps, condescend to commune with all alike among those who invoked her. A great portion of the time which followed the accession of James and preceded the Revolution under his grandson was barren both of learned and of rustic verse. Convulsion followed on convulsion; the religion of the people's heart was sought to be overthrown; and they drew the sword in defence of civil and religious liberty. An ancient line of native princes was banished like aliens, and a prince or protector, half hero, half tyrant, succeeded. Scotland was invaded and subdued, but her enemies died or were weakened by discord, and her ancient princes were recalled. They returned only to imprison, persecute, and slay; and having learned nothing from adversity but to reward good with evil, were driven

again into an ignominious and perpetual exile. In the midst of all this strife and commotion, the Muse of England sang some of her most joyous strains; but her sister of the north, crushed in spirit, and persecuted in her sons, and troubled probably in conscience, remained silent; nor could either the triumph of the kirk, or the romantic deeds of James Grahame, woo from her sullen lips a single verse of triumph or of sorrow. We have, therefore, no songs in honour of the kirk—a theme accounted, perhaps, too holy for a profane art—and we have no songs in praise, either of the valour which so effectually checked the arbitrary career of the first Charles, or of the heroism which sought to win his throne for his son from the bravery of Fairfax and the cunning of Cromwell. "Songs and ballads," says Addison, "the creation and the delight of the commonalty, cannot fail to please all such readers as are not unqualified for the entertainment by their affectation or their ignorance; and the reason is plain, because the same paintings of nature which recommend them to the most ordinary reader also recommend them to the most refined." But this was a time when the breathings of the lyric Muse seemed to have lost their influence in the north—the long and bloody struggle between the episcopal and presbyterian churches was more disastrous for Scotland, and saddened down her poetic spirit more, than did all the wars with the Edwards, or her fierce and successful contest with the church of Rome. Not only did no master-spirit in poetry arise, but it would seem that the rustic Muse was also mute,

and no longer contributed any of those rude but graphic and vivid verses which are so common in Scottish song. Our songs, with the exception of a few which had found sanctuary in the collections of the curious, were fast departing from the memories of our ancestors—they had long been lessened in public esteem, and were regarded by the professors of religion as the flowers with which the enemy of grace strewed the paths of temptation. It may well be imagined, that men who gave their nights to meditation and their days to self-denial could have little sympathy with love, and with the expression of the tenderer passions in poetry. Women were regarded by some of these stern worthies as little else than whited walls, and stumbling-blocks, and ensnarers of the sage and the devout. Scripture was quoted against the splendour of their dresses; the care with which they curled their love-locks furnished matter for a sermon; and their numbers and their beauty suggested to the castigated minds of some preachers an image of the strength and extent of Satan's empire on earth. During the continuance of this unwholesome system of kirk discipline, dancing was accounted a profane amusement; men were rebuked for listening or moving to the sound of any music save that of psalmody; and those who wished to learn this ancient and forbidden art were obliged to go in private and enjoy it with the terror of kirk-rebuke before them. I remember when the sons of a venerable and strict Cameronian stole out secretly every evening to a dancing school; but I have always

had a suspicion that the old worthy was aware of this backsliding of his offspring; and it was remarked, that in his prayers, which were exceedingly long and curious, he sought grace for those who "foolishly flang on a floor, and who leaped, and danced, and bent the knees (which should bend only to Him above) to a musical idol of wood and thairm."

Yet I cannot accuse the Cameronian worthy alone of compromising the principles of his sect, for I remember when many of the graver members of the established kirk accounted dancing an act little better than sinful, and sighed to think that a more relaxed state of discipline and greater freedom of manners had rendered the knowledge of this evolution of antichrist a necessary part of youthful education. Even apparel came in for a share of the consideration of the kirk; and simplicity and gravity in dress were commanded with an exactness of description which proves the earnestness of the preachers and their determination to be understood. Nor was it in the earlier days of the reformed kirk that this outward austerity was recommended and practised —that the self-denial of externals was considered a token of a purer and more sanctified spirit; it descended to a period within living men's memory, and it cannot be denied that it suited the condition of a poor and industrious people. But the silks and the scarlets against which the reformers and their successors lifted up their voices were out of the reach of the mechanic and the husbandman, till the activity of trade and the specu-

lations of commerce brought gold among our vales and hills, and then plenty grew too strong for the influence of the kirk, and homely gowns and homespun mantles were laid aside for the more splendid and more costly labours of the eastern looms.

That the constraint put upon harmless mirth and the limitations assigned to dress had any particular influence upon the character of our songs, I am not quite ready to say; but the example or precept of the old and the devout had their full authority among the northern dales, and I think the progress of song must have at least suffered a sore rebuke when the aged forbade the dance, and the serious considered it as a matter rather to be endured than applauded. It is true that the kirk had provided a substitute for the profane amusement of song; but the spiritual lyrics failed of taking a lasting hold on the popular mind—they were sermons set to tunes which suited only the staid and the self-denying. It fared otherwise with the religious letters of some of our early divines, which had a wide circulation, and found their way into the hands of the young and old, of the merry and the grave. I am afraid I must impute some of this success to the mistake which one with a moderate share of wisdom might readily make of supposing the spiritual courtships, which the letters described so lusciously, as real rather than figurative; and that the youth who wooed so warmly and so eloquently sought a more pleasing bride than an allegory. Few could read them and remain in the frame of mind which the divine

wished. Meston, in describing a sedate presbyterian dame, says,

She reads a letter
In Rutherford, and seldom misses
To light on those which mention kisses.

When age could make such a slip, can we expect youth to be wiser? It was about this period, too, if we may credit the assurance of Sinclair, that the enemy of mankind appeared in the most beautiful and seducing shape among the sons of men, and placed their souls and bodies in extreme hazard. Nor was the fiend content with nocturnal exhibitions in the shape, and wearing the hue and grace, of female beauty; but on one occasion he composed and sang a song which became suddenly popular: I am sorry that neither scorn nor fear induced the author of "Satan's Invisible World Discovered" to preserve one verse of this infernal lyric. At another time the same evil power cheered the witches of a western district with a singular exhibition of minstrelsy. The pen of a layman may not follow the privileged pen of a divine in the description of Belzebub's gambols, nor venture to record the name of the tune to which his hags danced—it seems too characteristic of its author to be named here. Tradition could lend its aid to history in recording many other of Satan's adventures as a poet and a minstrel, the creation of which I shall not be so uncharitable as to impute, as some have

done, to devout men who wished to impress a salutary dread of the sinfulness of song and music on the minds of our ancestors. They were, however, far too surely rooted to be so easily shaken; and I am afraid the dread of the evil one being abroad in the dark neither lessened the number of midnight assignations, nor the amount of exhibitions in the parish church—when the youth of the district were found worthy of standing on that "bad eminence," the repentance stool.

The decline of song may be safely imputed to other causes than to the interference of religion with the sports and pastimes of the people. When the old Scottish poet sang of the wine which the working husbandman drank—of his slumbering during the mid-day warmth—and of his whole days of relaxation from toil, he drew a picture of ease and abundance for which we can find no parallel now. If happiness is another name for wealth, we are much happier since assiduous agriculture has extracted riches from the land, and the rapid evolutions of machinery have rendered every stream profitable, and added its immensity of power to the strength of man. But I am not one of those who think that current gold is human happiness, and that man is more blessed in proportion as his wants and his labours increase and multiply. When a man could with five days' work earn subsistence for seven, he was surely in a fairer way of being happy than when he has to work six days for the like purpose; and though his food came not from a foreign land, nor his clothing from a loom farther off than his parochial village, are we to suppose

him less comfortable than ourselves with our teas, and our spices, and our silks? It was in the days when man obtained his sustenance by moderate labour, and had frequent remissions from toil, that we may place the golden age of song; and surely our ancestors, if they had more patience than we, must have had more leisure too, when they could listen to the chanting of our long romances and the singing of our martial ballads. To rise with the summer sun and not wipe the sweat from our brow till he sets, as many have done and do, may go far to obtain men a good name for laborious industry; but there is no Muse which presides over bodily labour: and though one of these heathen ladies patronised the dance, none of them took the plough, or the loom, or the saw, or the axe, or the hammer under protection. The patriarchal households of our ancestors were favourable for song and tale: the farmer presided among his servants, and, zealous for the good name of his house, watched over them with paternal care; he blessed their meals, countenanced, as far as the strictness of his religious virtues would allow, the innocent amusements of the evening, and then embodying the picture of humble devotion which Burns has painted with so much simplicity and truth, dismissed his dependants to repose, and was the last who went to sleep. A labourer himself, he was an example of industry to others, while his wife presided over the whole department of in-door thrift and economy, the management of cheese and butter, the spinning of flax and wool, the dyeing and bleaching of her webs, and innumerable other nameless acts of

domestic alertness and care, which distinguished a peasant dame of old, and were summed up under the name of household virtues. That we can find many such firesides now, I am well aware; but I am also aware that there are few now, compared to what there were within my own remembrance; and that they are becoming rarer every day. I shall be told, in answer to all this, that the new spirit which has arisen has cultivated our waste fields and clothed them with grain, removed our thatched houses with their floors of earth, and replaced them with mansions with slated roofs, ornamented ceilings, and carpeted floors; that our farmers' dames rustle in silks instead of linsey woolsey, and instead of singing to the running brooks

A music sweeter than their own,

they sing to the music of a piano-forte, and admonish their maidens in the good set speech of England; that their husbands spur their hunting nags, or drive their curricles; and that seated apart from the more vulgar portion of their household, in a parlour hung with family portraits, and with a figured carpet under their feet, they wonder at the simplicity and lowliness of their fathers. I admit this, and much more; but I deny that we are wiser, or better, or happier than we were. Wiser we are not—since we have made our vanity conspire to injure us: by the love of richer dresses, more delicate meals, and softer beds, we have entailed endless labour to support us in these luxurious delights, which, once tasted, cannot be given up. Better we are not—since

pride has separated the farmer from his dependents, placed him at the head of another table than his ancestors presided at, and made him forget those daily and devout ordinances which impressed a religious feeling on all the hearts of his establishment. And happier we are not—since the endless subdivisions of labour have made us more dependent—since all desire to be partakers of the luxuries which the fortunate speculations of men bring within the reach of the lowly and the laborious—and since knowledge has opened its mid-day light on all ranks, which, like the ray of Heaven, that, as the poet feigns, flashed into Hell, serves only to discover the miserable plight to which the half of mankind are reduced, to be the slaves of the other half. Change of condition, increase of knowledge, the calling in of machinery to the aid of human labour, and the ships which whiten the ocean with their passing and repassing sails, wafting luxuries to our backs and our tables, are all matters of delight to the historian or the politician; but of sorrow to the poet, who delights in the primitive glory of a people, and contemplates with pain all changes which lessen the original vigour of character, and refine mankind till they become too sensitive for enjoyment. Man has now to labour harder and longer—to shape out new ways to riches and even bread, and feel the sorrows of the primeval curse, a hot and sweaty brow, more frequently and more severely than his ancestors: all this is uncongenial to the creation of song and to its enjoyment—to its creation, where many of our finest songs have been created; and to its enjoyment, where it was

long and fondly enjoyed—among the peasantry of Scotland.

Besides all this, in the times of the ancient church, the festivals and fasts were numerous, and lax in observance; the saints, a legion in number, had each his annual period of honour, and the laity were indulged with much leisure for enjoyment. The fasts of the presbyterian church are few in amount, and strictly observed; and the sabbath gives not as of old its morning to the service of Heaven, and its afternoon to augment the pleasure and minister to the joys of mankind. Let not my presbyterian brethren imagine me desirous of revelling once more in the enjoyments which the thick-coming saints' days of the calendar present, or believe that my faith is different from their own, when I wish that all the days of man were not devoted to labour and religion. In the devoutest era of the presbyterian kirk, I am not sure that the sabbath was so strictly observed as it is now: it was at a Sunday foot-ball match that the death of Sir John Carmichael, the Scottish Warden, was plotted, in 1600; and in still earlier times, we find the heads of the church remonstrating against the representation of plays on Sunday. I defend not this breach of decorum, but I feel that in those days there was a desire for amusement and pleasure abroad; that man had more leisure for laughter than now; and that, during intermission from labour and frequent holidays, the Muse, whether merry or grave, was worshipped earnestly at the cottar's hearth and in the baron's hall.

Man's increase of wisdom, and the dread which knowledge has inspired of appearing to sanction what wit accounts absurd or ludicrous, have conspired against his ease, since they have banished annual processions, regular pastimes, fixed periods of feasting and dancing, and substituted labour, either bodily or mental, in their place. I confess it is impossible to survey, without a smile of pity or contempt, the annual exhibitions of our corporations, with stately steps and idle banners; and we are apt to extend the same scorn or commiseration to processions in which our nobles and our princes appear. It is impossible not to feel to the fullest the folly of such pageantry: here our knowledge steps in between us and our joy, and follows us with the grave diligence of Mentor on the steps of Telemachus, to rob us of pleasure, and poison the delicious cup which laborious folly has filled for us. We are grown too wise to be pleased with idle pageants, and too fond of variety, perhaps, to be long pleased with aught. We have tasted the luxuries of all quarters of the earth, and we love no longer the simple fare of our forefathers. All things change—we blush at the indelicate ballads which delighted our grandmothers; and the conversation of old queens, and the love-letters of old princes, are too free and too impure for the sylphs of the saloon in the theatre or the gods of the gallery. A thousand old observances, a thousand curious ceremonies, involving the manners and customs of our ancestors, are dead or dying away: the carousal which welcomed in the new year, the fires at Beltane, the mysteries and revelry of Hal-

low-eve, the festival at the shearing of the flocks, at the harvest-home, and many others, all times of song and mirth, have lost their olden spirit, and have either fallen into disuse, or are become like a saint's day—a mere mark in the calendar. I remember the enthusiasm with which the young, and the graver pleasure with which the old, would assemble on the return of an ancient day of jubilee; and the stories which were told, the songs which were sung, and the characters which were present, would form altogether a curious dramatic picture, and deserve the hand of Wilkie or Allan. The influence of such meetings, sanctioned by the presence and participation of age, had a great effect upon the youth of the district, and preserved an image of ancient manners, and was a kind of initiation into the mysteries and beliefs and feelings of their ancestors. I shall be told that it is well that all such foolish or superstitious observances are vanished, or vanishing, and that it is time to look at things by the light of wisdom, instead of by the dark lantern of ignorance. I am not sure that such light is in all things beneficial. It would be the same to Hamlet or Mac Ivor, if we could prove that the armed phantom and the gray shadow which appeared to them, and made such fearful revelations, were mere imaginings, or spirits of sticks and straw; the effect would be the same to the prince and to the chief; but what would be the effect on us? It would destroy the charm which the supernatural has diffused through those productions. The acute, and examining, and doubting genius of this age has unpeopled the green hills of their fairies,

the wild glens of their ghosts, and midnight of all its trains of phantoms and "grim features" which descended to us with the oral histories and religious creeds of our ancestors. That laborious and domesticated goblin, Brownie, no longer thrashes the corn with his shadowy flail, sups with supernatural glee the reward of curds and cream, and crosses a flooded river on the errand of a lady about to become a mother. Witchcraft no longer turns the milk of a thousand cows into blood—nor interposes between the father and his hopes of an heir, like the spells which impeded the delivery of "Willie's Ladye"—nor holds unbidden carousal on the wine of Brabant, and transforms ragworts or rustics into steeds and palfreys, to carry hags on their unhallowed errands. Ten thousand influences have passed away, and all the pomp of poesie, which embellished and made them acceptable, has departed in their train.

It would have been well had wisdom while it purified popular belief of the grosser portions of its creed, like the reformers when they broke the images of the papal church, allowed the rest of the superstructure to stand. But the spring-fire which destroys the furze destroys also the nests of a thousand song-birds; and the peasant, who goes a trouting with lime, leaves nothing alive in the stream. I wish that wisdom had spared us some few harmless and poetical beliefs. I could wish, for instance, to have the dread of a visitation from the grave, like Johnson; to have so much fear of the spiritual world left as would make me, while travelling during the night, keep a sharp look-out on suspicious places,

like Burns; and I would wish, more than all, to have upon me a feeling, between joy and fear, when wandering among the wild hills by moonlight, lest I should happen to hear the unearthly minstrelsy of the fairies, and see them coming in procession over the earth, as peasants saw, or imagined they saw, of old. But if I can spare the presence and the inspiration which more or less accompanied these beliefs, I can less afford to spare the poetical impulse which they gave to human thought—the wild and imaginative colouring which they shed upon our language—the images which they suggested, and the illustrations which they supplied. That we owe to them much of our romantic poetry, there can be little doubt: they have left their indelible impressions every where among our early ballads. That we owe to them much of that poetical elevation of thought and expression which distinguishes our peasantry, I could show with little leisure, and in little space, since the dream of superstitious belief has not yet wholly passed away.

I imagine I can perceive already in the conversation of the peasants of the lowlands of Scotland the effects of the vanishing of this long and acceptable vision of the phantoms of old belief. The stream has dried up, or ceased to flow, and the bed over which it meandered is rugged and unsightly. A poetical and imaginative people nursed these old beliefs in spite of their education and the light which learning shed: while their southern neighbours, having less imaginative power, and much less knowledge, dismissed them as idle and unprofitable

encumbrances. Much of the richness of illustration, much of the poetical strength of expression, has left us; and what was accounted the fittest food for the Muse is charmed away from her lips by the magic-wand of adventure, invention, and discovery. To a shepherd's way of life, poetry may be supposed to have little to add, since his whole existence seems poetical; yet when the arrows of the elves, and the spells of the witches, were broken or destroyed, the poetical part of sheep-surgery departed also: he now consults the receipt-book, and seeks no longer to avert or cure the evil which has fallen on his flock by the poetry of charms or conjurations. The mariner, when he spreads his sail for a foreign shore, no longer purchases a favourable wind and a prosperous voyage from the witches of Lapland or Galloway; and though he whistles for the breeze when the sea is calm, he does so more through custom than from the hope of awakening the sleeping wind. The fisherman, when he dips his nets in the water, thinks not now of augmenting his draught of fish by warbling to his victims a charmed rhyme; and the cowherd, when he drives his cattle to the pasture, has forgot of late to regulate their movements, and protect them from the spells of witches, with a rod of rowan-tree. A horse-shoe is no longer nailed above the stable-door, as a charm against the entrance of mischievous beings; nor is an ox's head buried under the barn threshold, to ensure the coming of the corn unblighted to the flail. The maid dreads no more the influence of evil eyes over her gathering of cream, as the churn staff

ascends and descends amid the fragrant element; and the matron, as she bars her door at night, summons no more

Saint Bride and her brat,

and all other powers, in whose might her ancestors had belief, to protect her and hers from all manner of fiends and shapes in the service of Satan. These, and many other rural superstitions of a poetical nature, have melted away before the thaw of knowledge.

When the King of Ithaca was storm-bound and spell-bound by the ancient poet, maritime discovery had not laid down her charts, settled the longitude and latitude of the isles of the ocean, and given the inhabitants and productions a place in history; he was therefore at liberty to find land where he listed, and to people it with enchantresses and giants and winged fiends, since the critics could not turn to the last map and the latest voyage and cry, "This man confounds navigation, and pulls history by the nose." Our steps are regulated by the compass, and our motions by the quadrant; and the Muse has no nearer resting-place where she may indulge her inventions than on some few acres of untrodden snow, near the North Pole, around which she may yet see the marks of the feet of my townsman, Richardson. When the peasant stood on the hill-top, and looked to earth and sky as the sun sank, to discover the promise of to-morrow, he composed something like the rudiments of poetry as he remarked the colours of the clouds, and the amplified or decreased appearance of the hills, and deduced from the varied scene before him the certainty

of sunshine or rain. He sits at home now and consults his almanack. When time was computed by the sun's shadow, or by the evening lights, a shepherd, as he gazed on the stars and moon, composed a poem while he pondered out the hour: the bughting star, and the northern wain, and the plough, are all names fitted for rustic poetry; but they have slipped out of conversation now that a watch has usurped their office. Men had their lucky days on which they transacted business: a sailor was unwilling to weigh anchor on a Friday; and a family was sure to be overwhelmed with calamity and misfortune, had the heads of the house chanced to marry in May. Two magpies on the roof of a dwelling-house were ominous of a funeral in one county and of a wedding in another: a hare hirpling before a youth as he was on the way to his love, during the twilight, has made him pale, and induced him to break his tryste; while a shower of rain on a bridal procession has gone nearer to snatch the bride from the bridegroom's arms than all the address and cunning of his rivals. I have known men set down a corpse and wait till a cloud interposed between them and the sun before depositing it in the earth. Such a superstitious feeling is still recorded in English rhyme:

> Happy is the bride that the sun shines on,
> And happy is the corse that the rain rains on.

These and innumerable other remains of a curious and primitive people have been current in many men's

memories; and as they contain the very elements of poetry, there can be little doubt that poetry has suffered by their loss, and that man is become more of a machine —an instrument capable of cultivating a given quantity of ground—a spinning-jenny for preparing thread—a kind of military engine covered with plumes and scarlet, for demolishing towns and destroying the human species.

I have allowed the subject of song almost to sink in the flood of superstition; and though I am aware that many curious snatches of old beliefs are yet unmentioned which contributed to its diffusion and its fame, I shall leave them to the memories or imaginations of my readers, and proceed with the less visionary part of my introduction.

When we approach toward times either within the reach of history or traditional memory, many customs, and ceremonies, and oral institutions, and reliques of ancient things, all connected with and illustrative of song, present themselves at once, each claiming notice and precedence. After emerging from the ocean of civil and religious war which desolated Scotland and ended in the establishment of her liberties, we reach a period when song first began to claim and obtain the notice and protection of the public, and was gathered into a safer sanctuary than oral remembrance. It is much to be lamented that more was not done—that along with the reliques of our lyric verse some collection had not been made of those dramatic ballads which formed a part of the rustic interludes or plays, accompanied with a clear and graphic account of en-

tertainments of which some vestiges are still visible. Some of these may be reproached with being indelicate, others with being vulgar, and some with being profane; but unsuited as they might be to the taste of the present age, they would have presented a rich and accurate picture of other times, and assisted in explaining many dark passages in tradition, in poetry, and history. Along with these we should have had the domestic history of our peasantry when, laying aside the spear and shield, they sought to amuse and entertain themselves, like all people on the way to refinement, with pursuits which united bodily exercise with mental; we should then have seen those mixed audiences which had the good taste and the patience to listen to the long martial ballad of the Douglas and Percy, which moved Sir Philip Sidney like the sound of a trumpet; we should have seen our rude and simple ancestors seated at their hearths, with their weapons of war and the chase grouped on the rough walls, and the chimney hung with the produce of sea and shore, while around a blazing fire the tale and the song abounded. All this, and much more than this, may be gathered from oral recollection, and from the existing condition of the people in the pastoral districts; but Fancy must be indulged in ekeing together these fragments of departed and departing things, and though a pleasant companion, she is an unsafe historian.

The customs, amusements, and beliefs, which our ancestors connected with song, were many and curious, and claim the attention of all who would learn the hi-

story of our lyric poetry. Song is found mingled with our joys and with our sorrows, with our labour and with our devotion; it speaks sometimes with a heathen, and often with a Christian tongue; often lends its aid to beliefs dark and mystical, and illustrates as an active and visible agent some custom or pastime yet living among the peasantry. Song followed the bride to the bridal chamber, and the corpse when folded in its winding-sheet,—the hag as she gratified her own malicious nature with an imaginary spell for her neighbour's harm, and her neighbour who sought to counteract it; even the enemy of salvation solaced, according to a reverend authority, his conclave of witches with music and with verse. The soldier went to battle with songs and with shouts; the sailor, as he lifted his anchor for a foreign land, had his song also, and with song he welcomed again the reappearance of his native hills. Song seems to have been the regular accompaniment of labour: the mariner dipped his oar to its melody; the fisherman dropped his net into the water while chanting a rude lyric or rhyming invocation; the farmer sang while he consigned his grain to the ground; the maiden, when the corn fell as she moved her sickle; and the miller had also his welcoming song when the meal gushed warm from the mill. In the south I am not sure that song is much the companion of labour; but in the north there is no trade, however toilsome, which has banished this charming associate. It is heard among the rich in the parlour, and among the menials in the hall: the shepherd sings on his hill, the maiden as she milks her

ewes; the smith sings as he prepares his welding-heat; the weaver as he moves his shuttle from side to side; and the mason, as he squares or sets the palace-stone, sings to make labour feel lightsome, and the long day seem short. Even the West India slaves chant a prolonged and monotonous strain while they work for their task-masters; and I am told they have a deep sense of sweet music, and no inconsiderable skill in measuring out words to correspond with it.

Songs invoking the presiding spirit or patron saint of wells and waters, for the cure of men and cattle, were once common; and if any authentic specimen could be obtained now, it would make a valuable addition to our lyrics. Many such wells, and pools, and lakes, were scattered among our hills and vales; and to them, mostly on the first morning of May, the peasantry flocked far and near, for the sake of healing the sick or the maimed, with a drink from the charmed water as the day dawned. A short hymn or song expressive of faith in the virtue of the spring, and of hope of health in the sick person, was first chanted, and then the pilgrims knelt down and lapped the water from their hands. It was unusual, or subversive of the charm or the virtue of the water, to drink it from a cup, unless the cup happened to be a blessed one, such as the pious of old always had in store for opulent pilgrims. When a cure was performed, and tradition says many were, the crutches of the lame, and a garment of the sick, were presented as an offering, and laid on the margin of the water, or suspended from the boughs of a neighbouring tree; and this too was gene-

rally accompanied by a religious chant. On the brink of many wells in Dumfriesshire and Galloway, ribbons, and other little articles of female finery, have been seen by people yet living, fastened so as to wave over the spring, the offerings of mothers for the recovery of their children; and several of the wells yet bear the name of the guardian saint, and stories of the cures they wrought of old are still current in the country. Some of the richer pilgrims expressed their faith or their gratitude by dropping a coin of silver, and sometimes gold, into the well; and when it was known that any one who abstracted the offerings was instantly punished with the infirmities of those who made them, we may suppose they were untouched by all whose fears were too strong for their cupidity. A piper, it is said, once stole an offering made by a luxurious laird in Galloway, and was instantly admonished of his folly by a severe fit of the gout.

The virtues of many other wells were of a less limited nature, in which case their ability to cure particular ailments was ascertained by a very sure and simple experiment. A garment from the body of the ailing person was carried to the well and laid on the surface of the water, while a superstitious hymn or invocation was sung. If the garment sank before the song was done, the well refused its aid; but if it floated, the recovery of the person was certain; and the virtue of the water must have been great which floated the massy dresses of our ancestors. In this way, also, the recovery of horses and cows afflicted with any malady was tried,

and a bridle of the one, or a piece of cloth which had touched the other, was generally used, and their sinking or swimming depended much on the dexterity of the messenger. The virtue of a certain well was so great, that on one occasion it floated a horse-shoe: a rival spring sought to eclipse its sanctity by floating a pound of butter. I never but once had the good fortune to hear one of those hymns: it had been chanted on the recovery of a young woman, when a snood of silk was suspended over the spring that cured her. It was a rude rhyme, yet it had a sound unlike that of any other lyric to which I had ever listened. I have endeavoured in vain to remember any part of it, for I heard it recited as a curiosity when I was very young; but since I cannot give the exact words, I will not run the risk of censure by substituting a version which might echo back the sound without the sense of the original.

Another superstition, of which song was frequently the offspring, was that of asking every evening the protection of some particular saint for the house, the inhabitants, the cattle in the fold, and the corn in the stack-yard. I am not sure that I should regard this as a superstition at all, but as the performance of a religious duty, a proof of domestic care, and perhaps the forerunner of that solemn family worship to which Burns with so much truth imputes the excellence of the national character. That it was performed in rhyme we have the testimony of an enemy, or, more correctly speaking, of a man who saw in it, not a relique of the old religion of the land, but an instance of the power of

Satan on earth, and a recommendation of the household to his care and protection. The rhymes are indeed rude, and speak of the saints whose patronage was sought with a familiarity without example now, but perfectly consistent with the character of our ancestors.

Who sains the house to-night?
They that sain it ilka night.
Saint Bryde and her brat,
Saint Colme and his hat,
Saint Michael and his spear,
Keep this house from the weir.

At the period when such lyrical prayers were popular, it required the strong protection of a military saint to save a house from being herried by the borderers, who, when they put their feet into the stirrup to make a foray into Scotland or England, chanted a rhyming prayer, which was never uttered perhaps without some honest person being the poorer for it before morning.

He that ordained us to be born,
Send us mair meat for the morn:
Come by right, or come by wrang,
Christ, let us never fast owre lang,
But blythely spend what's gaily got—
Ride, Rowland, hough's i' the pot.

But to follow song through all the capricious windings of superstition would require more knowledge than I

possess, and more patience than is usually the lot of those who seek information about such light matters. I cannot, however, avoid noticing the metrical charms which were once commonly sung on many occasions, by which man brought, or imagined he brought, something of the influence of both worlds, of good and evil, to the assistance of his labours or his designs. Thus the weird sisters in Macbeth sang as they filled their infernal caldron; and their short uncouth verses resemble the remains of some of our old lyrical incantations. Ben Jonson has imagined another hymn in the same singular spirit: and I remember to have heard a curious fragment of a similar character; but nothing remains on my memory save two lines:

Frog's foot and blood-stone,
Dog's pluck and herring-bone.

The witches of Lapland are said, by sailors, to conjure the winds into bags and bottles by means of song, and thus, through the aid of their lyrical skill, are enabled to bestow the blessing of a speedy voyage on our impatient mariners. When butter came with reluctance from the cream, it was, in ancient times, enticed or compelled to appear by the chanting of a charm; and I am not certain that such songs have wholly ceased to be used among the dames of the north.

Come, butter! come, come!
Come, butter, come!

Saint Peter 's at the gate,
Waiting for my butter'd cake;
Come, butter! come, come!
Come, butter, come!

If the butter could resist such a melodious call as this, especially when seconded by the labour of the singer, ordinary industry might despair.

There is a kind of lyrical lament, or melancholy dirge, which was chanted by the mourners over the corpse while they laid it in the winding-sheet, and strewed such flowers and sweet herbs as the season yielded, that seems once to have made its way among the peasantry of England as well as of Scotland. It had not always, it is true, the same tone of sadness, and the same pathetic description of the attractions of the deceased, and the same hopes expressed for his future welfare, which would seem to be the natural character of such dirges. There was sometimes a note of mirth amid the sound of woe; and the solemn song which was chanted by the living at the side of the dead accorded not always with a voice from the tombs. In truth, the interval—and it was frequently a long one—which elapsed between the shrouding of the corpse and the interment, was often spent in feasting and carousing; and it is by no means an exaggerated picture of a house of death, which is painted by the old bard in the ballad of the Humble Beggar, "some were merry and some were sad, and some were blythe as blythe could be." The song or dirge often contained an exhortation to charity and be-

nevolence, and expressed the singular belief, that the deceased, in his way to bliss, would have to go through a doleful region of frost and snow—through an untrodden country full of thorns and briers, and finally have to pass over a bridge, which, springing from the earthly side of a dark flood, reached only to the middle of the stream. On his way, however, all the good deeds he had done in life came to help him in this perilous journey: the clothes which he had given to the naked covered him as he went through the region of frost; the shoes which he had bestowed in alms found their way to his own feet in the desert of briers and thorns; and when he came to the broken bridge, the spirits of the just whom he had befriended bore him, not without dipping his feet in the dismal stream, to the celestial side. The Mahometans seem to share in the same belief when they imagine that all the pieces of paper which believers pick up will come of their own accord and interpose between their naked feet and the ploughshares of red hot iron over which they have to pass into paradise. The lyke-wake dirge in the Border minstrelsy, a rude but impressive chant, expresses a similar feeling, and induces us to grieve that no more of these superstitious lyrics have been preserved.

Though the lyke-wake songs have ceased, we may easily recognize, in the prayer which is offered up before the mourners move the body from the house, the same train of thought, the same feeling, which those lyrics expressed, sobered down and modified to suit the simpler worship of the presbyterians. I have often been struck

with awe when the body was laid on the bier, when the mourners had taken their places, and the women had subdued their feelings into a tear and a sob, to see some venerable man uncover his gray hair, and, placing himself at the head of the coffin, offer up a prayer of resignation and condolence. The prose of the old man's prayer was more poetical than the rhymes of the lyke-wake lyrists; and I am far from sorry that such unseasonable examples of our national love of song have long ago ceased. I am free to confess that I never heard the language of the lowlands of Scotland so graceful, so pure and impassioned, as I have heard it from a peasant's lips as he prayed by the side of his ancient comrade and fellow-labourer, laid out in linen, cold and senseless, and about to be borne to the grave. All the grosser parts of the language sank as the feeling of his loss took possession of him; and if ever I could say that I listened to what I might imagine akin to inspiration, it was when I heard prayers uttered near the bed of sickness and the bier of death.

The consideration of song carries me to scenes less grave or mysterious than those which I have sought to sketch; where, if superstition mingle, her looks are less dark; and if sadness intrude, it is but for an instant, like the wings of the raven passing between us and the sun. Among the many topics on which human belief chose to employ song, one of the most curious was that of the intercourse which the powers of pleasure and mischief had established between mankind and the fairies. That diminutive and poetic race with which human be-

lief has not yet wholly ceased to tenant our northern hills and dales were willing at times to show themselves among men, and exchange mutual courtesies and deeds of kindness. In many of their benevolent actions was a mixture of elfin mischief; yet when they went about any serious wickedness, they had a kind of unearthly glee and capricious good-humour about them, which more than half atoned for the arrows which they shot among the flocks, and for the exchanges which they sometimes made of their own dwarfish progeny for the children of men. In whatever deed they were employed, music and mirth accompanied them, and still their speech was song. The music which the lady of Tamlane heard, and the wonderous procession which she saw, had been heard and seen by others of the maidens of Caledonia: and among the many tales which lent wings to the winter evenings, the most pleasant and the most poetical were those which described the midnight processions of the Fairies, the charms of their minstrelsy, the beauty of their songs, the splendour of their palaces hidden in the bosoms of the green hills, and the life of joy which they led riding under the new-risen moon or wandering among the abodes of men, concealed by the power which they had of becoming invisible when they chose. The impulse which this beautiful and diminutive race gave to our lyric poetry may be traced through many of our earlier compositions; and if we regard them as the mere creatures of the popular imagination, then we may take their character, and the actions ascribed to them, as a very lively specimen of

the wild and romantic spirit which distinguished our ancestors. The firm assurance and belief which the peasantry had, and have, in their existence, can only be known by those who have an intimate acquaintance with the cottagers of Caledonia. In every green hill they are believed to have fixed their abode; in every solitary and beautiful turn of a mountain stream, they have been seen dancing and making all the glen resound with their mirth; and in every wild and picturesque and seldom-frequented path, they have been observed in all the pride of equestrian procession, hurrying along to the music of many instruments. I confess I cannot see in the character and in the actions imputed to this poetic race any very close resemblance to the imps and satyrs of other countries; but if the belief were an imported one, we have made it our own by the way we have dressed it out in the Scottish costume of poetical superstition.

If the songs and minstrelsy of the Fairies communicated none of their own aerial spirit to the popular poetry, still the general belief in their existence and their influence served to keep up the more ethereal part of the spirit of song. All that pertains to them and every attribute bestowed on them, and all the actions which the caprice of popular fancy has imputed to them, are purely and essentially poetical. They never performed menial drudgeries, like the Brownie, for the sake of lying stretched out all the chimney length, and supping curds and cream by the warmth of the midnight embers: nor had they the gross and sensual pro-

pensities of the witches, whose inspiration served only to degrade them in vulgarity below the rest of mankind; nor were they humbled into the form of an animal, like the Kelpie; nor doomed to drag a fish's train, like the Mermaid: their shapes and their pursuits were stamped with the character of a generous and an elegant superstition. If popular belief makes them exchange at times their own progeny for the children of men, it imputes no cruel motive for the deed; and if they are charged with falling in love with handsome youths and beautiful maidens, and with carrying them away to Fairyland, they only interposed between them and sudden death or lingering sorrow, and saved those who were doomed to an early grave. It happened when I was a child, that a neighbouring gentleman was returning from a fair with his only son, a fine youth, some seventeen years old: within call of his house was a brook, which in summer-time a child four years old might wade, but which now, augmented by a thunder shower at the head, came down deep and broad; and being somewhat of a mossy stream, the increase of its waters made no great increase of its sound. The night was dark, and when the father reached the opposite bank of the brook his son's horse was by his side, but the saddle was empty. Instant search was made, but the body of the youth was nowhere to be found. Soon after, it happened that the young man's sister was returning home along the bank of the same stream: it was about the twilight, and she had reached the fatal ford, when her brother suddenly appeared and addressed her. She felt no alarm, she

said, for he had the same sweet kind look which he ever had to her, and his voice was not altered. He told her he was not drowned, as had been supposed, but was carried into Fairyland, and allowed to revisit the earth but once every moon. When he fell from his horse he was caught before he reached the water, and borne away as if he had been carried on wings, and laid down in a wild glen in the middle of a meeting of fairies, who were all seated on the grass, listening to a new song; he was hailed as one redeemed from drowning, clothed with a green mantle and placed on a white horse; and a fairy, passing her hand over his face, bade him look, for he was among friends: and he looked, and saw the faces of many men who were supposed to have fallen in battle or perished at sea, and one of them was his own uncle, whose ship had sunk in the Solway with all its mariners aboard. Yet he wished not, he said, to dwell away from his father's house, and from a sister whom he tenderly loved; and though he could not return of himself, he might be won back by a dauntless and intrepid spirit. On the first night of the moon he would be one of a troop of fairies who would pass by the parish kirkyard, and the mark he would be known by was a cornpipe, on which he was to play; and the tune he would play was the one which his sister loved,—"Aye waking O?" He entreated her, if she wished to win him, to hide herself in the churchyard, and when the fairy train came by, to leap up and seize him, and claim him as a Christian in the name of God. All this she promised to do, but she had not the courage of the heroine of Carterhaugh;

for the fairy procession overcame her so much with supernatural terror, that she allowed her brother to go by without attempting his rescue. He was never again visible; but she heard him often, as the fairies rode past, singing with a mournful voice of his own unhappy fate and the love he bore his sister.

In the extensive credit which this wild story obtained we may see the desire that mankind has of imagining an intercourse with the other world, and also the feeling which never separates fairies from song. This might be exemplified in a thousand wild traditions—and tradition in a matter of this kind is a much safer guide than the conjectures of the learned and the creations of poets, whose genius had received a colouring from classic superstition. They are apt to see every thing with Greek or Latin eyes, and desire to look in the mythology of the ancients for the gloomy gods and sportive elves of the north. I shall not, however, attempt to follow my subject through all the winding vistas of common belief, but proceed to examine some of those old customs and amusements where song was often the chief pleasure, and always a welcome auxiliary.

By those intimately acquainted with the manners and customs of the peasantry, something like the remains of a rude drama—a representation uniting the fourfold qualities of acting, dancing, music, and song—must have been often observed at weddings, at harvest-homes, and other festivities. To me it has appeared under three different forms; and a brief description of each may recal similar rustic attempts at dramatic representation

to many of my northern readers. The first I saw was called "The Wooing of the Maiden," a favourite pastime at the close of a wedding feast, and indeed it seemed designed as a humorous portraiture of the vicissitudes of courtship. When dancing and carousal had quickened up the spirits of the wedding guests, and just before the time of stocking-throwing, the door of the barn was opened, and a youth and maiden entered, keeping time to the sound of the fiddle which commenced the air that gave a name to the entertainment. The youth was a lively peasant with no small share of inventive humour, and dressed in the extremity of the fashion; while the damsel personated with very good grace a fantastic old maid, flourishing in ancient finery, with a sharp shrill voice and a look of great importance. They advanced to the middle of the floor beating time to the tune, and smiling upon each other, and mimicking the appearance of delight and joy. This pantomime having lasted some five minutes, the maiden sang part of a song adapted to the music, which praised the charms of opulence, and laid the scene of domestic love and endearment among bags of gold, in the middle of many acres, and concluded with extolling the wisdom and discretion of age. This was answered by a song from her lover, which, with the usual enthusiasm of youth, spoke with great contempt of charms which were rated by the acre—of attractions which were weighed by gold; and laid the scene of true love endearment at the time when maidens step out of their teens. As the charms of the rustic actress happened to be far from considerable, and as she had in

all appearance overstepped her teens a good score of years, she considered this lyric declaration of her lover as somewhat personal, and proceeded to resent it in very passable pantomime.—She strode round the floor with the stride of an ogress, and shivered all her finery with anger and pride as a fowl ruffles its feathers. Her lover seemed by no means desirous of soothing her; he mimicked her lordliness of step, and the waving of her mantle, and stepped step by step with her and the music round the floor. He then took an empty purse out of his pocket, shook it before her face, threw it into the air and caught it as it fell, and burst out into another verse of song in contempt of riches and all who possessed them. This was answered by a corresponding verse from the maiden, in which she laughed at empty pockets, and scorned poverty, in the way the world has ever done. He then turned from her in great anger. And now began the more dramatic part of the entertainment: he danced round the company, and having singled out a young woman, the most beautiful he could find, he saluted her, took her hand, danced with her into the middle of the floor, and made earnest love as far as the silence of pantomime would allow. This excited the anger and jealousy of the other; and as the nature of the dance required the music still to be obeyed by the feet, we had a very good dance; a very good song from the slighted lady, in scorn of her landless rival; a song in reply from the other, vindicating the supremacy of youth and beauty against the influence of moorlands and meadows; and, finally, a verse from the hero of the

entertainment, rejoicing in the choice of his heart in opposition to that of avarice. This kind of contest continued some time—one moment limited to pantomime, and the next breaking out into satiric verse: it ended, however, as all contests of that kind generally do, in the triumph of her of the houses and land, and with her success the representation terminated. I may add, that I have seen it acted without the assistance of song, and that the addition of the verse, though a great improvement by lending voice to action, impeded the operations of the dance and rendered it subordinate.

The next pastime of this kind which I shall notice seemed to be a dramatic presentation of a contest between Idleness and Industry, between Waste and Thrift, and gave its name to, or took it from the well-known air of "The Roke and the wee pickle tow." It is commonly acted at one of those carousals called harvest-kirns, and commences by the musician playing the air which introduces to the floor and to the audience a staid and thrifty-looking dame, with a roke or distaff in her bosom replenished with flax, from which she twines or seems to twine thread. She is joined in the dance, but not in the industry, by a joyous, middle-aged man, somewhat touched, it may be, with liquor; he holds a candle in his hand, and dances with her round the floor, beating accurate time all the while to the music. He of the candle sings a verse to the air of the music, in which he laughs at thrift, and counts industry a colder companion than pleasure. She of the roke replies to this, and tells him in song that idle pleasure ends in sorrow

and repentance, while homely industry brings peace and happiness, and shuts the door on pain and on poverty. The music, played purposely slow for the sake of the song, bursts out more boldly, and the dance, like that of the witches in Tam O'Shanter, grows fast and furious; for the man endeavours to set the roke on fire with his candle, while the woman eludes him with great activity, and all the while the music and the feet echo to each other. This contest continues for the space of five minutes or more, and then they renew the bickerings between idleness and thrift in satiric song. On the side of Industry, many proverbs pressing the necessity of thrift are woven into verse, while all the curious sayings which ridicule labour, and paint pleasure lying idle among beds of lilies, are at the command of him who would have been the "Unthrift" in one of the old moralities. Fire prevails however at last against its combustible opponent, and the pleasure of the audience is measured by the duration of the strife; for it requires no small management and agility to preserve the "Roke and the wee pickle tow" amid the evolutions of the dance. This dramatic entertainment, I understand, is sometimes represented without song, and it is not at all improbable that it forms only a portion of some more important performance.

I have already elsewhere in this wandering introduction anticipated the account of the third description of the rustic drama—a Nithsdale interlude, acted on many occasions of festive merriment, and known by the name of "Auld Glenae." I have little doubt that this comic,

but not over reverent interlude, was originally intended for two persons, one the sinner, and the other a professor of the kirk; and that the humour of the whole was sustained by the assumed gravity of admonition and rebuke on the one hand, and the arch simplicity of the transgressor on the other; the whole being intended to ridicule the inquisitorial scrutiny of the kirk session into all offences against chastity. The reverend actor is omitted in modern representation, and the humour of the piece is entirely supported by the delinquent, a man whose hoary hair and age-bent frame almost give an answer to the charge. I have seen it performed before a rustic audience with applause: but I believe it has now, along with all similar entertainments, fallen into disuse or discredit. I love so well whatever gives us an image or a notion of the character and pursuits of our ancestors, as to wish that the remains of all matters of this nature were collected by a curious hand and preserved for posterity.

The condition of the bulk of the Scottish population was in itself favourable for the production and continuance of song; and long after the minstrels were forgotten, many of the peasantry, without perhaps any skill in music, supplied their place in the recitation of romances, in the chanting of ballads, and in the singing and sometimes in the creation of songs. Such men I remember—a kind of district historians, who had a tale for every hill, and a song for every stream, and a proverb for every casualty in human life and affairs. They knew the history of each family, and the characters

of the living and the dead; they could see in a rising name the fulfilment of some ancient prophecy, and in the sinking of another that some long treasured-up curse was coming to pass. At the hearth where they were seated for the evening were gathered many of the youths and many of the maidens of the district; and songs and tales and anecdotes abounded till midnight. They had grave stories for the grave, and gay songs for the gay; nor when the cups were moving and the maidens away did they want some of those free and characteristic strains which abounded when the kirk sought to chasten song by means of the "Godlie Ballats." I claim for these parochial poets neither the name of minstrel nor the importance of the art. But if they communicated none of the lofty, buoyant, and elegant spirit to verse which the minstrels are supposed to have supplied, they certainly brought a naïveté and rustic skill, a freshness and originality of thought, and maintained that lively dramatic cast of composition which has given so much spirit to northern song. If they had not the outward look, nor came in the pomp and circumstance of the ancient lyric professors, neither were they rewarded with chains of gold, and embossed cups, and costly dresses. The payment they received was more agreeable to their vanity than to their avarice, and the world grew daily more penurious; for I once heard a person of this description declare that Nithsdale was for him half-a-crown a week worse than when he first knew it.

Another source of song may be found in those evening meetings, or trystes, which for various purposes of

pleasure or thrift are still popular in the lowlands. They took their name from the purpose for which they were assembled; and they originated probably in that spirit of good-fellowship and mutual obligation which scripture enjoins, and which our early presbyterian divines pressed so anxiously on their flocks. The pursuits of pastoral or rural life present, it is true, no meetings of rank or of opulent beauty, and no dignified labours, such as beseem knighthood and may be worthy of the courtly Muse. To card wool, and spin yarn, and acquit themselves in the pressing labours of domestic life, are matters which have a mean sound, and may seem no very elegant work for those who infused fresh feeling and new spirit into Scottish song. Nevertheless, our assertion is true, and we have the authority of Burns to support us if any support were needed. It was at a "Roking" on Fastern's E'en where he first heard the song of old Lapraik; and at similar meetings I have not only heard new songs of merit introduced, but curious variations of old ones sung, and very clever opinions expressed on their merits. To such meetings we owe many variations which we have in ballad and in song, which change the sentiment, and alter the narrative, and remove the heroine of the old bard to make room for some district beauty.

To the sharp encounter among the provincial wits we also owe many curious and felicitous interpolations, humorous or sarcastic, of which several examples might be given. The great excellence of all such changes is not so much the new turn which they give to the

song, as the way in which they are wrought into the narrative, and seem to be as natural as a new bough is to a tree. In these meetings it would be idle to seek for that refinement of expression and courtliness of sentiment which public taste demands now; and yet, amid the rudest of our strains, we have touches of natural delicacy, and verses of as exquisite grace of expression, as are to be found in the more elaborate compositions of the Muse. Talk, it is true, intervened; and stories and mirth interposed to prevent the evening from becoming tedious by the repetition of lyrics, many of which were old and well known; and episodical passages of love or recognition would assist in adding variety to the domestic picture, and contribute some of those characteristic charms which a painter uses in emblazoning as with national heraldry the main object of his composition. Still, however, song was one of the chief spells which called the meetings together, and the genius of the rustic Muse was not more brought into action than the natural good taste and the sweet and exquisite voices of some of the maidens in singing. Scottish song in meetings such as these, I am free to confess, and willing to endure the pity of scientific performers for acknowledging, had charms for me which have never been equalled by the more skilful and more accurate warblings of some of the most popular singers in our theatres. There may be some nationality in this, but there can be no mistake in the feeling which the rustic or learned performers excited. I am willing to find a reason for it in the very nature of our northern lyrics. When we hear one of our simple songs full

of domestic and humble love, and illustrated with the imagery supplied by rustic life, warbled amid a multitude of people rustling in the richest dresses, and sparkling in gold and jewels, and diffusing an odour which the united fragrance of several regions produces, we are struck with the singular dissimilitude, and think of the violation of time and place, and the utter want of keeping between the character of the song and the audience. But what perhaps is still more injurious to the full effect of the performance, is the departure of the singer from that style of expressive simplicity which echoes back to every bosom the sentiment and feeling of the words, and encumbers the air with a profusion of ornament which overlays the poetry. I may also add to this the circumstance of those who perform being, in some degree, obliged to sing to please a manager or an audience rather than their own fancy; and that the head rather than the heart is made to pour out the strain. With less practice and with less knowledge a country maiden will sing us one of the popular strains which the heart of Scotland has of old sighed out to a corresponding air, and selecting only what she feels, what seems to embalm some sentiment of her own, or presents to her eye some image of enjoyment or of sorrow which has been awakened in her own bosom, she will charm and elevate us by the heart and the passion with which she endows it. If we look around too while the song is singing, we shall see all nature, the hill, the vale, the stream, and the pastoral loveliness of the place, in strict union and keeping with the poetry, and forming a kind

of framework or historical accompaniment, such as Burns beheld on the robe of Coila. Impressions as vivid as these have been frequently excited while I listened to the song of a maiden — herself yet unseen — coming winding and flowing among the broomy knolls and honeysuckled hollows of my native land; or when, accompanied by the shepherd's pipe, she

> Added her sweet voice to the lyric sound,
> And sang with much simplicity—a merit
> Not the less precious that we seldom hear it.

But there are dearer and tenderer meetings than the trystes for labour or for mirth, to which we owe the chief impulse to the composition of song, to which it is indebted for its purity, for its passion, and for all indeed that elevates it above the mere contention for bread, which man has to hold with the world. The passion of love, which many poets have sung and few sung well, infuses a poetic spirit into many minds and hearts, and compels them to burst out for relief into involuntary song. The great proportion of our lyrics presents this passion under all the varieties of pleasure or of pain which it inflicts on mankind. They contain a record of love adventures, often very wild, impressive, and romantic, rather than an exhibition of fine sayings and pointed sentiments. Sentiments, indeed, often lofty and generally tender and delicate, are found to mingle with the history of the midnight watchings and the joy of the stolen interviews. The youth—the peasant youth of

Scotland—are devoted servants to the fair, and their love adventures, amid a wild and picturesque country, during the storms of a winter or the gentleness of a summer night, encountering the wiles or the strength of rivals and the caprice of those whose love they seek, present abundant materials for poetry and romance. Many of our lyrics have been composed during these nocturnal excursions; and a wild night and a haunted road, a deep stream and a desert moor, stand in the way like so many impediments in the path of a knight errant of old, which it was meritorious and honourable to overcome. But the wild night and all the dangers of the way, natural or supernatural, are forgotten when the lover approaches the home of his mistress, and sees the warning light at her window, or meets her at the appointed place of tryste. And it may be well if to a warm heart and a persuasive tongue he adds a strong arm and good courage, for many a handsome maiden would think her charms unworthy of song if they brought but a solitary admirer. In humble life as well as in high, there is an archness and a coquetry which is soothed and gratified by variety of admiration. A maiden has been known to summon on a time her numerous lovers around her, among whom she presided for a whole evening, with comic gravity of satisfaction at the extent of her dominion, distributing her smiles and her glances in a way which bade all hope and none despair.

In the first outburst of young affection there is a poetic exaltation of heart and soul, a romantic enthusiasm, which invests its mistress with a beauty and a

loveliness which men of soberer spirits may not readily see in the original. When this enthusiasm is poured out in song, and the finest songs are perhaps the fruit of these first inspirations, men go in quest of the lady who performed the enchantment, and exclaim with Moore,

What an impostor genius is.

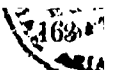
I believe in the influence of beauty over the Muse, and I imagine that in many of our songs I behold an express and modest image of many a Caledonian dame. But I have seen so much of the caprice of those spirits who enchant us with their songs, how they lavished all the allurements of verse and the choicest colours of nature upon very ordinary subjects, that I am almost induced to conclude that more of our best lyrics are prompted by women, on whom Dr. Johnson would have declared poesie had no charms to bestow, than I dare presume to name. He can indeed be no true poet who has not already enshrined in his heart and fancy diviner images of female beauty than nature readily supplies him with. He sits not down, like one about to make a portrait, to limn his mistress off; his pictures of beauty are aerial images of grace and loveliness conceived in his own fancy, and coloured more with the hues of heaven than of earth. By this rare faculty he hallows and ennobles all he chooses to touch, and endows ordinary forms and common minds with the shapes and riches of fancy. Much of this mistempered warmth is cooled as poets advance in life, and song is sobered down into domestic discretion

and matron-like mildness, and the austere composure of beauty.

But I have no need to seek in trystes or meetings of either love, or labour, or merriment, for the sources of song: a farmer or a cottager's winter fire-side has often been the theme and always the theatre of lyric verse; and the gray hairs of the old, and the glad looks of the young, may aptly prefigure out the two great divisions of Scottish song—the songs of true love, and those of domestic and humble joy. The character of the people is written in their habitations. Their kitchens, or rather halls, warm, roomy, and well-replenished with furniture fashioned less for show than service, are filled on all sides with the visible materials and tokens of pastoral and agricultural wealth and abundance. The fire is on the floor, and around it, during the winter evenings, the family and dependants are disposed, each in their own department, one side of the house being occupied by the men, the other resigned to the mistress and her maidens: while beyond the fire, in the space between the hearthstone and the wall, are placed those travelling mendicants who wander from house to house, and find subsistence as they can, and lodgings where they may. The carved oaken settle or couch on which the farmer rests has descended to him through a number of generations; it is embossed with rude thistles, and rough with family names; and the year in which it was made has been considered an era worthy of the accompaniment of a motto from Scripture. On a shelf

above him, and within reach of his hand, are some of the works of the literary worthies of his country: the history, the romance, the sermon, the poem, and the song, all well used, and bearing token of many hands. Among them also are some of the elder worthies, divines, and graver poets of England: and if the productions of Wordsworth be not there, it is only because they have but lately come to a price within a prudent poor man's reach; for I know of no works more deeply impressed with the simple pathos and devout aspirations so dear to the peasantry of our land. If I add to these the sibylline leaves of song which the idle native Muses scattered so largely in the form that suited alike the plowman's pocket and purse, and which were again dispersed weekly, or rather daily, over the land, by a multitude of dealers in cheap tales and romances and ballads, I may say I have completed the picture of the "Goodman's" side of the house, and may turn myself to the other, where I left the mistress presiding among her daughters and menials.

Around the farmer's dame the evening has gathered all her maidens whom daylight had scattered about in various employments, and the needle and the wheel are busied alike in the labours required for the barn and the hall. Above and beside them, all that the hand and the wheel have twined from fleece and flax is hung in good order: the wardrobe is filled with burn-bleached linen, the dairy shelves with cheese for daily use, and with some made of a richer curd to grace the table at



the harvest-feast. Over all and among them the prudent and experienced mistress, while she manages some small personal matter of her own, casts from time to time her eye, and explains or advises, or hearkens to the song which is not silent amid the lapses of conversation. In households such as these, which present an image of our more primitive days, all the delights, and joys, and pursuits of our forefathers find refuge; to them Hallow-eve is welcome with its mysteries, the new year with its mirth, the summer with its sheep-shearing feast, and the close of harvest with its dancing and its revelry. The increasing refinement and opulence of the community has made this rather a picture of times past than times present; and the labour of a score of wheels, each with its presiding maiden, is far outdone by a single turn or two of a machine. The once slow and simple process of bleaching, by laving water on the linen as it lay extended on the rivulet bank, is accomplished now by a chemical process; and the curious art of dyeing wool, and the admixture of various colours to form those party-coloured garments so much in fashion among us of old, have been entrusted to more scientific hands. Out of these, and many other employments now disused and formed into separate callings, song extracted its images and illustrations, and caught the hue and the pressure of passing manners, and customs, and pursuits.

From these and a thousand other sources of pleasure or seriousness our numerous lyrics have arisen, and it would be much more curious than useful to trace all the way.

ward steps of fugitive song, and draw with an exact and discriminating hand the changing character and varying condition of our peasantry. In a history of Scottish song, much must be decided by judicious conjecture, much must be gathered from the internal evidence of verse, much collected from an extensive knowledge of northern literature, and when all is found that exists, and all is arranged that research can supply or judgment suggest, there will yet be many chasms in the narrative, and many periods when the light of song is lost in darkness, or scarcely visible in eclipse. The current of song has not always been poured forth in an unceasing and continued stream: like the rivulets of the north, which gush out into rivers during the season of rain, and subside and dry up to a few reluctant drops in the parching heat of summer, it has had its seasons of overflow and its periods of decrease. Yet there have ever been invisible spirits at work, scattering over the land a regular succession of lyrics, more or less impressed with the original character of the people, the productions of random inspiration, expressing the feelings and the story of some wounded heart, or laughing out in the fullest enjoyment of the follies of man and the pleasant vanities of woman. From them, and from poets to whose voice the country has listened in joy, and whose names are consecrated by the approbation of generations, many exquisite lyrics have been produced which find an echo in every heart, and are scattered wherever a British voice is heard or a British foot imprinted.

Wherever our sailors have borne our thunder, our soldiers our strength, and our merchants our enterprise, Scottish song has followed, and awakened a memory of the northern land amid the hot sands of Egypt and the frozen snows of Siberia. The lyric voice of Caledonia has penetrated from side to side of the eastern regions of spice, and has gratified some of the simple hordes of roving Indians with a melody equalling or surpassing their own. Amid the boundless forests and mighty lakes and rivers of the western world, the songs which gladdened the hills and vales of Scotland have been awakened again by a kindred people, and the hunter as he dives into the wilderness, or sails down the Ohio, recalls his native hills in his retrospective strain. These are no idle suppositions which enthusiasm creates for national vanity to repeat. For the banks of the Ganges, the Ohio, and the Amazons, for the forests of America, the plains of India, and the mountains of Peru, or Mexico, for the remotest isles of the sea, the savage shores of the north, and the classic coasts of Asia or Greece, I could tell the same story which the Englishman told, who heard, two hundred years ago, the song of Bothwell Bank sung in the land of Palestine.

The darkest night will draw to day, and the longest introduction, whether to verse or prose, must come to a conclusion. The continued account of our song, and the critical examination of its excellences and its failings, will be mingled with the characters, which I now proceed to delineate, of the most eminent of our lyric

poets. I shall endeavour to speak as I feel; for all criticism resolves itself into that at last, and all rules are made from emotion, whether of pain or of pleasure. The poet makes the critic, not the critic the poet: he whose productions live longest and give the most pleasure is probably the greatest genius; and it is from what he makes men feel, that they make rules for measuring the genius of others. But each nation has an original spirit and power of its own, a way of attaining excellence in its own eyes, different in some degree from that of its neighbours; a manner of expressing its joys, its sorrows, its anger, or its fears, which marks it out among the nations; and of these peculiarities will its literature, if it be written with a free and unconstrained heart, more or less partake. I am therefore of opinion, that with a strict reference to a nation's peculiarities, all its works of genius should be judged. The women of Greece, if we may decide from the exquisite marbles which have escaped the barbarians, had a loveliness of another kind from that which distinguishes the beauties of Britain; but I feel as a Scotchman, and though I cannot but believe the women of the east to have been eminently lovely, I have no wish that the loveliness of this country should be less divine than it is. Genius is as a star that can only be examined by its own light.

JAMES THE FIFTH.

Our knowledge of the lyric genius of the Common's King we owe to tradition, which, mutable in many things, has been so consistent in this, that its words have become history. That he was the author of the Gaberlunyie-man there can be little doubt; and its companion, the Jollie Beggar, though less delicate, seems the offspring of the same mind and of the same train of thought. They are both productions of great merit—remarkable for their roguish humour and freedom of expression, and for their lively and drama-like presentation of character and story: they are strictly of that kind of poetry which I consider as the natural offspring of the soil—which owes nothing to classic lore, but is called into existence by some strong impulse, and wins its way to popular favour by reflecting a vigorous image of homely life. I must, however, suppose that these favourite songs owe some of their influence to the royal hand that wrote them. We imagine, while singing the songs of James Stuart, that we are singing of his adventures also: we see the gallant monarch, with his horn by his side and his belted knights near, in the Jollie Beggar; and in the Gaberlunyie-man, we think more of the monarch than of any of his subjects. I know not where to seek for a livelier picture of joy than is exhibited by the mother when "she danced her lane, and cried, Praise be blest;" or more real and ludicrous

naïveté than the surprise of the maiden when she imagined she had obliged a mendicant instead of the laird of Brodie.

It has been observed of these two ancient lyrics, that they give us gross and sensual pictures of life, and cannot well be read aloud without shame, or sung without a blush. To wish them otherwise than they are is either to wish they had never existed, or that they had uttered their wickedness with a holier tongue. That we wish such spots removed from the white garments of the Muse, is a proof that our taste is different from that of our ancestors; but no proof that we are right, and that they were wrong. The simplicity of former times, and the frank directness of conversation, allowed greater latitude of expression to the Muse. The daughter of Henry the Seventh permitted a poet of her husband's court to address her in a style of audacious freedom, which her son has not surpassed in his songs expressly dedicated to nocturnal adventure and rustic intrigue among the daughters of his subjects. The statue which our ancestors loved to see in simple and unattired beauty, we cannot look upon without drapery reaching from neck to feet.

Old times are changed, old manners gone.

Yet no change of manners, or evolutions of time, will much affect poetry which is founded in nature—and this makes the lyrics of the king as fresh and lively and intelligible as they were when they were composed.

ALEXANDER SCOTT.

Gay, and light, and elegant beyond most poets of his time, Alexander Scott sang with much more sweetness than strength, and was more anxious after the smoothness of his numbers than the natural beauty of his sentiments: he flows smooth, but he seldom flows deep; he is refined and delicate, but has little vigour and no passion. Yet his verses are exceedingly pleasing—they are melodious, with meaning in their melody, and possess in no small degree that easy and gliding-away grace of expression, of which the old minstrel vaunted:—

> Forbye how sweet my numbers flow,
> And slide away like water!

In acknowledging the skill of Scott in lyric composition, and uniting with my friend David Laing in admiring the ease and happiness of his versification, I cannot be insensible that his songs, with all their elegance, have little of the romantic ardour of exalted love, or present, amid their grace and fluency, any very original or moving pictures of domestic life or enthusiastic attachment. The songs of James the Fifth and his subject, Scott, are as different in their nature as their reception has been with the world. The former, full of visible life and jollity and enjoyment, with life's-blood in them for a thousand years, have descended to us without any

loss of their original brightness, and still rival the works of more admired poets. The latter have already become half obsolete—are faded and gone, like the green huntresses in an ancient tapestry: they speak a language to which few hearts respond, and are consigned, in spite of all their polish and their melody, to the place over which oblivion reigns. It requires no divination to find out the cause of this: it is the triumph of vigorous nature over the polished dexterity of art—the upshot of that contest which sometimes takes place between a court beauty, "with patches, paint, and jewels on," and the easy and natural and becoming grace of some unconscious piece of country loveliness, whose beauty charms us by the very absence of the supplemental attractions of her rival. The one is encumbered by her finery, and is merely an auxiliary to the magnificence of her own dress; while the other moves in the freedom of nature, and all that is about her becomes her as much as light becomes the morning. Scott sometimes falls into a laboriousness of alliteration, like other poets of his time, but he never degenerates into allegory.—I wish his strength equalled his simplicity.

ALEXANDER MONTGOMERY.

Montgomery deserves more notice than he has obtained; he was long spoken of, but seldom read: and I am willing to believe that the fortunate abuse of Pinkerton contributed to his fame by arming in his behalf

all the lovers of old Scottish song. The cast of his genius is lyrical—there is a sweetness and a liquid motion about even his most elaborate productions, and one cannot easily avoid chanting many passages on perusal. His thoughts are ready, his images at hand, and his illustrations natural and apt. His language is ever flowing, felicitous, and abundant. His faults are the faults of the times.—Printing had opened the treasures of ancient lore; and all our compositions were speckled and spotted with classical allusions. He embalms conceits in a stream of melody, and seeks to consecrate anew the faded splendour of the heathen mythology. Such idle display of scholarship was less affected then than it would be now. To glance, as the stream of story flows along, at old glory and at ancient things, is very well when happily managed and not dwelt upon; but Venus can only come into courtships now to be laughed at, and the most reasonable god in all the mythology will abate rather than increase the interest of any living poet's song.

Montgomery could not resist the allurements of the scholastic Dalilah: he seems rather to have been inspired by books than moved into voluntary numbers by the silent influence of nature; and his learning overlays his better powers, as ground may be made unproductive by too much manure—the fatness spoils the seed which is sown. It was perhaps his misfortune that he was learned. He is fond of allegory, and more fond than fortunate in using it: like all those who give way to such puerile temptation, he becomes too dark to impart

pleasure, and too mystical for instruction. For the want of human interest—for the absence of the sons and daughters of men—no beauty of invention can atone: if beauty could bring readers, Montgomery scatters it with a ready and liberal hand.

He is full of chivalrous admiration of the ladies; and has put himself, for the love of the lady Margaret Montgomery, through a series of lyrical ordeals, from distant awe down to closer admiration, from vague fear to agony without hope. The elegant and varied praise with which he followed her was such as few ladies might withstand, if they ever allowed their hearts to be touched by the witchery of verse. But their prudence is proof against the magic of poetry: the flush of youth and the glow of health seek less ethereal delights than verse, and few young ladies are carried off their balance by the tide of song. I know not how the lady Margaret received or rewarded his homage; yet had he been successful, vanity could not have kept silence.

Montgomery has been praised, and justly, for the purity of his English; but his wish to write in a courtly and polished style made him wrong his natural powers. He had genius equal to the task of using his native language in a graceful and dignified manner: had he done this, his fate as a poet might have been widely different; it would indeed have confined his fame to Scotland, but the admiration of our native land may fill up the measure of a very respectable ambition. His enthusiasm for all that was beautiful and pure, and his sympathy in the scenery and characters and manners of his native land,

would then have flowed out in language such as would not readily perish. As he is, so must we take him! I have endeavoured to modernize several of his lyrics; and if I have had any success, it has been more owing to good fortune than meditation. Those who wish to taste the spirit of Montgomery, pure and unmingled, must go to my friend David Laing, whose beautiful and complete edition of the poet's works will enable them to drink at the fountain-head, and be refreshed.

SIR ROBERT AYTON.

Sir Robert Ayton, secretary to the Scottish queens Mary and Anne, is one of the fortunate poets who have obtained a reputation by one lucky or judicious effort—by obeying one of those vagrant fits of inspiration, which, like the flower of the aloe, comes but once in a lifetime to some, while to others, under a happier dispensation, they return as regular as the light of day. But he is well worthy of his fame, were it higher; for his song to a Forsaken Mistress is one of the sweetest and happiest of our early compositions. It has the singular merit of uniting natural elegance of language with originality of thought, and wholesome counsel with felicity of diction. We have the story of woman's levity, and of man's sympathy, related in a way which has been rarely equalled, and which must be felt by all who can feel for the modest dignity of offended love. It was on this song that Burns, with a superfluous sympathy,

bestowed a Scottish dress, and thought he had improved the simplicity. It was one of the least lucky of all his attempts at emendation, for it was not easy to augment the simplicity; nor has he done it:—it was easier to pass over it a careless and less gentle hand, and impair the elegance and lofty sympathy with which it closes.

All who read the Forsaken Mistress will be grieved to think, that the poet who could charm us so much in his native tongue should have poured the stream of his fancy into the dark regions of Latin verse, and laboured, like Buchanan, to make the world feel his genius in a language which only a few of the opulent understood. I cannot imagine how a man can hope to write felicitously out of his mother tongue: by what spell is he to be possessed with all the proverbial turnings and windings of language, all those meltings of word into word—those gradations of meaning direct and implied, which give a deeper sense than they seem to bear, and assist in the richness and the strength of composition? The language may be learned, and words may be meted out in heroic or lyric quantities by the aid of a discreet ear; but such verses will want the original flavour of native poetry—the leaf will come without the fragrance, and the blossom without the fruit. I may mention that the Forsaken Mistress seems to unite the two characteristics of Scottish and English song; there is story mingled with sentiment—the former without prolixity, and the latter without conceit. I cannot always say so much for either the one or the other when they come separate.

FRANCIS SEMPLE.

Tradition of late has provided authors for some of our favourite songs; and since authentic history declines to chronicle those who furnish matter for present and future mirth, I can see no harm in accepting the aid of traditionary remembrance. On such authority, aided by the less doubtful testimony of family papers, Francis Semple of Beltrees has obtained the reputation of writing three popular songs, "The blythesome Bridal," "Maggie Lauder," and "She rose and loot me in." I have heard the tradition, but I have not seen the family manuscripts; and though I am not obliged to believe what I cannot with certainty contradict, yet I have no right to discredit what honest men have seriously asserted: the story has been years before the world, and if any be sceptical, they are also silent. Semple is of itself a worthy name—I am glad tradition has taken its part: besides, we owe much poetic pleasure to the ancestors of Francis, who wrote, like their descendant, with great ease and freedom; and why should not the mantle descend?

Whoever wrote these three popular songs, I confess I prefer his humour to his seriousness, his mirth to his gravity. There is a certain air of heaviness about "She rose and loot me in," which is thrown off, as the morning sun throws off the cloud, when the festive subjects of "The blythesome Bridal" and "Maggie Lauder" are presented to his fancy. They who are offended by the

uncontrollable humour and broad glee of the latter cannot fail to be captivated by the admirable naïveté and witty grace of the former. Even the controversy which the lass of Anster Town has occasioned has helped to proclaim her name and attractions to the world. "It is a song of more than dubious meaning," quoth Gravity; "and more is meant than meets the ear." "It is a lyric full of harmless merriment," answers Mirth; "and what can be dubious in the din of a bagpipe and the dancing of a maiden?" "Her garments are too high kilted," says Chastity, "and her dancing on a lonesome burn bank to the music of a strolling piper is very indecorous." "Ah! but she's a pleasant lass," replies Humour: "her strapping limb and gawcie middle would make grayheads wish to be young—Decorous! I wish all our ladies were as decorously employed as in wagging their limbs to the sound of a merry melody." "Make no personal reflections," quoth Hypocrisy:—and so the ball is kept flying, and the fame of Maggie Lauder is ever in the air.

"The blythesome Bridal" gathers together many singular characters, and prepares a dinner fit only for the entertainment of such guests. Smollett's feast in the manner of the ancients is unworthy to be compared to it; for none save the entertainer could enjoy a meal with an antique flavour strong enough to have smothered Lucullus. The viands of Semple are in strict conformity with the culinary fancy and practice of old Caledonia; and the guests and the dishes are the whimsical but native produce of the country. We have no other song or

story which spreads such a remarkable feast for such extraordinary people. That the poet has drawn a ludicrous company, and dished out a dinner more for men to laugh at than enjoy, is perfectly true, and in that lies much of the beauty. A bridegroom must be curious in uncouth companions who invited to his wedding all the queer characters of the county; and very particular in his taste, if he had for his banquet all the strange dishes which his knowledge of cookery, written and oral, could prescribe. But the poet is one person, and the bridegroom another: what gives the former enjoyment, will give the latter pain: the matter which fills the fancy of the one with images of humour and drollery, will make the other sigh and repine: no bridegroom would wish to preside among such a motley squad, but any poet would be proud of having painted them. It is the province of poetic mirth to gather such strange sticks together, and tie them with party-coloured thread. The company and their feast are beyond the reach of any art save poetry: even Wilkie could not paint fadges and brochan, and the rich odour which ascended from the bridal dinner; nor could Chantrey carve Madge, that was buckled to Steenie, nor Kirsh with the lily-white leg, and the strange way in which her misfortune befel.

The freedom with which some of the characters are drawn has gone far to exclude the song from company which calls itself polished. I quarrel not with matters of taste—but taste is a whimsical thing. Ladies of all ranks will gaze by the dozen and the hour on the unattired grace and proportion of the old statues, and

feel them o'er, like the wondering miller in Ramsay's exquisite tale, lest glamour had beguiled their een; but the colour will come to their cheeks, and the fans to their faces, at some over warm words in our old minstrels: whatever is classical is pure. They are a strange and a deluding sex; their tastes to-day, and their dislikes to-morrow,

let learned clerks explain,
They pass the wit of simple swain.

WILLIAM WALKINSHAW.

"Willie was a wanton Wag," one of our popular songs, has been long ascribed by tradition to Walkinshaw of Walkinshaw, near Paisley; and as tradition in this matter can neither be confirmed nor contradicted, I must accept general concurrence for certainty, and give that gentleman the authorship of one of our most original songs. Whoever was the author, no one ever conceived a more original lyric, or filled up the outlines of his conception with more lucky drollery, more lively flashes of native humour, or brighter touches of human character. Willie is indeed the first and last of his race: no one has imitated him, and he imitated none. He is a surpassing personage, an enthusiast in merriment, a prodigy in dancing; and his careless graces and natural gifts carry love and admiration into every female bosom. The eulogium of the bride equals a certificate of character by the parish minister; his rapidity in com-

municating pleasure seems as quick as the diffusion of light; and yet all this, so welcome to the bride, and so agreeable to the lasses, in general, costs him no effort—to please is natural to him: his careless ease and buoyant happiness of manner, his wanton leg and his roguish look, become him as fruit becomes the tree, or light the moon. The very "tag" at his shoulder has something talismanic about it.

That our poet's glee sometimes hovers on the debateable land between propriety and indelicacy, I am not disposed to deny; but if the light of his genius, like that of the will-o'-wisp, glimmers over the mire, it never falls into it. The author has drawn the whole wedding scene with such fidelity and resemblance to life, that we see it revealed before us fresh and moving: there laugh the lasses, there blinks the bride, and there the "lag" bridegroom yields up the contest with the inimitable Willie, who, like the general spirit of fun and life, shines out in the midst, and animates and inspires them. Since tradition has helped this song to an author, I wish it had done as much for "Andrew wi' his cutty Gun," and "Tibbie Fowler o' the Glen," songs of kindred spirit, and rivals in humour and naïveté, and every way worthy of finding fathers in some sponsible personage.

ALLAN RAMSAY.

In Allan Ramsay I see the great successor to the royal race of bards, who laid the foundation of the rustic

or national poetry of Scotland, in Peblis to the Play, Christ's Kirk on the Green, and the Gaberlunyie Man; and I see more, I see in him the restorer of song, and the first who strove to redeem from oblivion, or rescue from the changeful memory of tradition, the ancient lyrics of the nation. In the passion, enthusiasm, and elegance of lyric composition, he has been far indeed surpassed; but he has never been surpassed in rustic glee, frank, manly humour, and in his happy groupings of humble life. He is warm, over warm perhaps, in some of his addresses to beauty, and less delicate than a poet now would desire to be who wishes to be published in that sweetest of all ways of publication, by the lips of the ladies. He may be justly accused also of being much too blunt and direct in his mode of wooing, and far too plain and too honest for negotiating in lyric verse with a court lady now: he dispenses with all chivalrous ceremony of approach, and never moves for a moment in the parallel lines which modesty and fear have laid down for lovers to walk in. Yet I am judging him too strictly when I try him by the present gazette standard of female delicacy and fashion. He was once amazingly popular, with high-born dames as well as with humble; and I am not to suppose, that in the year of grace, 1724, the ladies were less virtuous in conduct than at present. They spoke with some freedom when they allowed poets to sing such unceremonious strains.

In all he writes there is a large measure of enjoyment, and he sings from the fulness and overflowing of mirth and humour. What he sees, he sees for himself; living

life is ever present to his eye, and he has made himself intimate with nature in all her familiar varieties. He sings of domestic love and fireside enjoyment like one who knows what charms a kind wife and promising children cast over a susceptible heart; and he loves to paint the ridiculous pretensions of age to the warmth and animation of youth, to extract mirth and amusement out of the follies of gray heads, and to make the words of love drop as cold from their lips as rain from a winter cloud. He pours out his humour till delicacy cries enough; he shows so much of the white legs of his rustic beauties that all their descendants grieve for the scantiness of longitude in their grandmothers' garments; and he dishes out domestic life in sauce too savoury for the prudent dames of the present generation. He forgets nature sometimes for the sake of foreign gods,

> And lays his lugs in Pindus spring,
> And invocates Apollo.

He had little tenderness, and little elevation of sentiment; he had raptured moments, but they were those of ordinary peasants. His ease was the ease of nature, and his gift lay in grouping rustic characters, in seizing on the infirm and ridiculous side of human life: he had less power in personating sweet and austere female modesty and grace, or in painting the gentle but wayward emotions of the bosom.

In his restorations of ancient song he has been sometimes singularly unhappy; he inherited little of the gift

of creating new verses in the spirit and feeling of the old, when the starting train of thought required elevation or purity. In the song of Bessie Bell and Mary Gray he has despised the plaintive warning of the old commencing words, and offered violence to one of our most moving and romantic stories, by infusing mirth instead of sadness, and gaiety for simple pathos. But his fortune is far otherwise when he has mirth or humour for his companions; he renews the laugh, and renovates the glee, and revives the humour, with a skill and an earnestness which have never been surpassed, and but rarely equalled.

It has been for some time the practice to upbraid Allan with negligence in collating, and want of sympathy in editing ancient songs; his accusers forget that he was the first who made the attempt, and that without his aid we might have had nothing where we have much—that he was a daily labourer for his bread, and had not leisure to go in quest of the torn and bleeding members of old song: that he rescued many from certain oblivion, we have the evidence of his works; but that he threw willingly away any of our beautiful antique lyrics for the sake of filling their place with his own, we have no assurance save surmise. He says, indeed, that feeling assured how acceptable new songs to known tunes would prove, he had made verses for more than sixty, and thirty more were done by ingenious young gentlemen. But Allan, with all his vanity—and he had a reasonable share—and with all his imperfect taste—and he was not without it—had far too keen a sense of the beauties of

song to cast any productions of merit away. Songs of genius protect themselves against duller rivals; they would have outlived—since they had lived so long—the negligence of any collector, and found safe sanctuary in some of those compilations with which the land was soon inundated. They who seek to believe that up to the time of Ramsay we had many oral lyrics of great antiquity and beauty, imagine also that he has supplanted them in popular esteem by his own inferior works—that he has buried the old gold to give currency to the baser metal of his own coining. I cannot see how the charge can be either substantiated or disproved, and he must be content to be assailed or defended by those who put harsh or charitable constructions on a passage which is open to both. How far he endeavoured to supply the place of what was lost, correct what was indelicate, or elevate what was silly, we may inquire in vain. But we may well imagine the song to be gross which Ramsay omitted on account of its indelicacy, and very dull and very weak which he threw away when he was labouring to fill up the craving appetite of volumes. It cannot be denied, that he gave a willing place in his collection to many exquisite old songs—that he preserved and eked out with more or less happiness many fragments and many choruses;—and are we to suppose that he denied the like care to any other deserving lyric? Of the many fragments of oral song which it has been my fortune to find, a number of them bear the names and characters of those which have been numbered among the lost favourites of our forefathers—they are

all alike licentious and indiscreet; and if I may judge of those suppressed by those that have survived, we ought rather to praise Ramsay's good sense than to censure his want of sympathy with the remains of our minstrelsy.

One of the foremost in bringing this charge against Ramsay was Mr. Ritson, who reproaches him with assisting ingenious young gentlemen to supplant the exquisite works of our ancestors. This reproach might have been spared; since two of Allan's friends in this labour are two of our sweetest lyric poets. Ramsay was certainly no very careful remover of the dust and cobwebs from ancient verse, and Ritson was as dry and as barren as the other was rash or careless. The latter was a learned and laborious person without the light of genius to guide him amid the gross darkness of antiquarian research; and the former sought after truth with less solicitude, perhaps, since he was sure of the poet's wreath if he missed the critic's. The Englishman edited poetry without much sense of its beauty, and watched over the scattered relics of fugitive song with the vigilance of a dragon; the Scotchman lived before this fastidiousness had become a fashion; while the changes which time was continually making in oral song were of every day occurrence, which he seemed to imitate when he filled up the gaps and breaches in old verse with a clever hand, and with an eye that was not more than nice in the choice of materials. Ritson's delight was in mutilated ballads, and he seemed not unwilling to be pleased sometimes with what he did not understand:

Ramsay loved no such mystery—he was a plain man, and relished a well told tale; and when he came to a difficult passage, he solved it like a poet, by making a verse in its place. If he made mistakes, and sometimes missed the feeling and spirit of the old melodies, he had many beauties to compensate, which were as much beyond the reach of Ritson as the critic's accuracy was beneath the poet's notice. Had Joseph edited the Reliques of Percy, he would have made a work as dreary as a Lincolnshire fen—had he collected the Minstrelsy of the Border, many of our most exquisite ballads would have remained amid the rubbish which obscured them, and we should have felt in his labours something like the misery of an invasion. The language of Ramsay is still as fresh, and his images of rustic life as living-like, as they were a hundred years ago.

LADY WARDLAW.

Neither history nor tradition has preserved any other proof of a genius of a very high order than is contained in the martial and pathetic ballad of Hardyknute, which both tradition and history combine in ascribing to Lady Wardlaw, daughter of Sir Charles Halkett of Pitferran. From the curiosity of her compeers or the vanity of her family, some other specimens of her poetic powers might have been expected—but whatever was looked for, nothing has come; and this is only equalled by her own modesty in seeking to confer

on an earlier age the merit of a production which of itself establishes a very fair reputation.

Much has been said and written against the antiquity of Hardyknute; for it was published as ancient, and is now become old in the duration of more than a century of controversy; but nothing has ever been said against its antique simplicity and sweetness, and its vivid imagery and pathetic beauty. Time, which dims the brightness of all that is not rooted deep in nature, has not impaired its lustre; and the gray-haired grandeur of the hero, and the feminine grace and fondness of Fairlie Fair, are never likely to escape from a reader's or a singer's memory. That it is modern there can be no doubt—the work of the ancient days resembles not the polished grace and the flowing melody of the compositions of the last century. I am, however, inclined to believe that it was founded on the remains of some romantic ballad; and that into the story of the old minstrel, Lady Wardlaw poured a spirit and feeling of her own, which communicated all the softer and more amiable qualities of the composition. There are certainly many passages which wear an olden look, and the mutable history of ballad poetry presents in a thousand places such renovations of ancient verse—skeletons upon which the Muse had breathed, recalling them to fresh life and a new existence. To a mind deeply embued with song and ballad, a few fragments would exhibit enough to inspire the finished story, emblazoned in all the splendour of Scottish romance. Gill Morrice and Tamlane owe no little of their present beauty to such

loving-kindness, and the variations of song and ballad conceal many affectionate and exquisite touchings and infusions, which add to the fame of our songs; yet no one ever doubts that the original framework of the story is old—very old.

WILLIAM CRAWFORD.

To William Crawford of Auchinames we owe some of our sweetest pastoral lyrics, and he shares in the glory or the shame, as poets or antiquaries speak, of assisting Ramsay with new songs for the old melodies. Though I certainly regard pastoral poetry as a foreign importation—as a sound to which the heart of Scotland has returned but a faint echo—I cannot refuse the praise of great nature, and tenderness, and truth, to the author of Tweedside and the Bush aboon Traquair. He speaks, it is true, of Flora, and sometimes breathes the luxurious richness of Sicilian landscape over the hills and vales of Scotland; but he gives us many sweet images of domestic life—utters many a moving complaint—and watches his flocks in very agreeable company. His pipe, like the pipe of Ramsay, is

A dainty whistle with a pleasant sound;

and it summons to modest love and chaste joy. Like the voice of the cuckoo, it calls us to the green hills, the budding trees, and the rivulet bank; to the sound of water and the sight of opening flowers.

It was the fashion of his day to utter pastoral lamentations, and complain of the caprice or the cruelty of shepherdesses. The sorrows of Corydon, and the coyness of Phyllis, and all the imaginary woes of artificial existence, have been woven with much elegance and grace into the many-coloured web of our lyric poetry. This pastoral taint entered not, as far as I am able to discern, into that ever living and natural spirit which supplies, from time to time, many of our most lasting strains: it was the malady of learning rather than of nature, the gentle disease of opulence rather than of poverty. They who introduced it and laboured in its support were men whom fortune had placed beyond the necessity of daily toil; and as they had felt the langour of idleness, and the misery of having no visible pursuit, they supposed toil to be the sweetest of all dispensations—a shepherd the happiest of living mortals—and his cottage the abode only of pleasure and poetry. They dipt their pens in perfume, and wrote a strain which showered roses among our heather, myrtles among our broom; made our streams run through beds of lilies, and our shepherds tread on everlasting verdure, and sing under bowers of jasmine and sweet-bleeding myrrh. Their swains wore garlands in their hair, and roses in their shoes, and wooed their nymphs in set speeches about old Pan, and songs about Arcadian groves, and the servitude of Apollo to Admetus.

All this costs little thought, and less observation. When poetry ceases to echo passion and reflect nature, it may be created like the morning gossamer; but it

must be content to be as frail and as fleeting. In common pastoral strains there is little of the truth of life; the shepherds are only summer swains unacquainted with the hard vicissitudes of seasons—who never sought their flocks amid mist and rain, or dug them out of a snow wreath some three fathoms deep. They are ignorant of the surgery of sheep; of the diseases which assail, or the vermin which torment them; and never dream of the fox, the murrain, or the moor-ill. Snow, said the wise man, is beautiful in its season; but our pastoral poets were not wise men, and snow never descends on their landscape; and they sigh for a shepherd's life because they think his slumbers are among roses—that curds and cream are eternally prepared for him by some neat-handed Phyllis—and that he never listens to a more sorrowful sound than the melody of his own pipe. The sharp cold air on a Caledonian mountain would freeze such holiday spirits up: to sit with wet feet on a wild hill, and seek shelter in a smoky hovel during the night, and be summoned from slumber by a wind which, instead of coming with frankincense on its wings, comes with mingled sleet and hail, are facts which seem never to have darkened their dreams.

The landscape of the natural pastoral Muse, and the seat where she sings, are of a far different character. A hill of heath,—a stream, half hid, half seen, amid a fringe of rock and hazel,—braes of broom, and mosses waving with canna, and smoke rising at the distance of many miles, to show that man is there, form the scenes of her contemplation. The ruins of an ancient castle, the

gravestone of some martyred worthy, and the peak of the parish kirk, may mix with these wilder objects, to remind her that she once strung her harp under the security of the sword, that persecution for conscience' sake once visited her pastoral wilderness, and that in her strains she should mix purity with her mirth, and holiness with her joy. The true Muse of native pastoral seeks not to adorn herself with unnatural ornament, her spirit is in homely love and fireside joy: tender and simple, like the religion of the land, she utters nothing out of keeping with the character of her people and the aspect of the soil—and of this spirit, and of this feeling, Crawford is a large partaker.

WILLIAM HAMILTON.

William Hamilton, a scholar and a gentleman, was one of our first lyric poets who sought to communicate a classic grace and courtly decorum to Scottish song. Not that equal grace and as finished courtliness had not been exhibited before, but they were beauties rather of accident than design; rather the natural or vagrant flowers of the soil than the production of settled thought and deliberate judgment. But the continual wish to be polished and polite interferes with passionate thought and the onward flow of emotion; and we have felt, in the sparkling lines of Hamilton, the absence of a ruder, but more expressive poetry, which made its way to the heart without much assistance from the head.

Prudence will always speak in character; she will be wise—she may be witty—she will utter nothing which is not pure and perhaps instructive: but passion is beyond all petty restraints; she will speak with vigour and with warmth; and as she speaks with the tongue of nature, her words will be happy, and her thoughts akin to inspiration. With the former of these dames, the Muse of Hamilton is content to dwell: she is ever graceful and ever neat; always wearing the dress which the reigning fashion has established; and all that she sings has been measured out with caution, and examined with a fastidious delicacy. The heart of the poet was more susceptible than ardent; he seemed, indeed, to be poetically under the influence of beauty, and continually suffering from the caprice or the scorn of some reigning despot, whose charms were equal to the destruction of a whole dynasty of pastoral bards. But he pleased himself, perhaps, with the lovely fictions of his own fancy, and never carried his homage farther than the harmless speculations of elegant verse.

He has, indeed, been charged with complaining of cruelty which he never felt, and of the influence of loveliness, for which he had no regard. If he obtained inspiration from beauty on such moderate terms, he is one of the luckiest of all lyrists: he would have been unwise had he scorched himself, when he only wished for heat; and he might have been charged with folly had he purchased the tree for the sake of the apple. If he formed an idol from the resources of his own fancy, and clothed it in beauty, and endowed it with all the graces

that could captivate and enslave, and then fell down and worshipped it, he only did what poetic genius has ever done, when, like the touched imagination of Don Quixote, it creates a goddess out of a very ordinary mortal.

Amid all the elegance and happy flow and delicate turn of language which distinguish his songs, he fails to make the impression which far less polished works make: he has little from nature; most from art: there are no unstudied turns of thought—no unsought happinesses of expression. His flow is not the spontaneous motion of the stream; and polish is communicated to his verse, like brightness to a key, by repeated handling. Yet though far from the native truth of Crawford, and wanting the clear original images and vivid portraiture of life and manners which distinguish Ramsay, he excels them both in the exquisite richness of his flattery, the delicacy of his compliments, and the neatness of his praise. He has far more chivalry than any of our earlier poets, but it is a fire which rather smoulders than burns; and the submission and courtesy with which he makes his approaches to woman, proceed less from a natural consciousness of her beauty, or a reverence for her person, than from a sense of etiquette, and a conformity to polished manners. And this may perhaps explain the charge which has been made against him of being insensible in his heart to woman's beauty, even while her praise was on his lips. The language of courtesy was mistaken for that of love; and when an open declaration of true passion, in plain prose, was

expected, the lady was petrified by verse—she snatched at a husband, and filled her arms with bays.

This awe and submission in the presence of woman, so beautiful and holy when mingled with sincere tenderness and honest passion, is cold and courtly when it only personates politeness and education. Our older ballads and songs make the charms and the chastity of the fair too subservient to the interest of the story, and are full of unwedded mothers and dames of dubious fame, who wander in the greenwood and cheer nocturnal lovers under the light of the moon. Of this easy system of morality Hamilton has retained no traces; but neither has he retained much of the peculiar character of Scottish song. It was the fashion of his day to choose out a mistress, real or imaginary, and to pursue her through vale and over hill with the wail and supplication of pastoral verse. This visionary sort of love led often to something purer perhaps, but far less natural, than the love of flesh and blood: we cannot help looking at the shape on which the poet has conferred so many attractions, as we would gaze on an allegory; and we contemplate her rather as the *beau ideal* of pastoral sensibility or affectation than as the living hope and joy of man's heart.

DAVID MALLET.

The ballad of William and Margaret, and a lyric or two in a less natural spirit, have given more fame to David Mallet than all his elaborated productions.

He wrote at a time when a lucky song or a popular ballad established a poet's fame, and furthered his fortune by introducing him to the notice of the noble. Had he lived lately, he would have died, like Chatterton, for want of bread—like Burns, in dread of a gaol—or like poor Tannahill, from the daily feeling of poverty and disappointment. That there is no patron to protect the Muse, was, is, and ever will be, the complaint: poets are too proud to sue, and too independent to beg, and refuse to plead the original sin of verse to entitle them to protection and relief: the rich and the noble, on the other hand, whom a wise Providence has made stewards for the poor, refuse to acknowledge poverty that is not clamorous, or want that displays not its rags and its sores.—With them, Poverty should come as one that runneth, and Want as an armed man.

I have been unable to trace in the other lyrics of Mallet any of that simple mode of expression, or that sweet and antique grace, which have brought so much fame to William and Margaret. The story, suggested by the fragments from which he imagined the song, seems to have possessed him too much to allow him to think of laborious polish or minute embellishment: he has been obliged to relieve his heart from the supernatural spirit of the tale by the charm of natural and inspired verse. I know not where to seek a finer mixture of pathos and terror in the whole range of Gothic romance. We feel, while we read, the presence of something unearthly and undefined; and we hear a voice which, like that heard by the prophet, makes all our

bones to shake. From the calm and gentle reproach of the spirit, we imagine the Margaret of flesh and blood to have been a meek and sweet tempered being; and in the request which she makes to have her maiden vow and faith returned, we remark the presence of an old superstition which allowed no repose to the living or to the dead till all ineffectual pledges or tokens were again exchanged.

Into this simple story and native style of composition the feelings of Mallet seem to have glided, as sap ascends the tree, to reanimate and cover it with beauty. Yet the polished and colder and less graphic style of verse must have warred against the remains of this Scottish taste, when he was induced to make some alterations which not only lessen the simplicity, but impair the terror which the story inspires. At first he caught up the starting note of the old fragments, and sang—

> When all was wrapt in dark midnight,
> And all was fast asleep.

He afterwards thought this "too naked of ornament and simple," and changed it to—

> 'Twas at the silent solemn hour,
> When night and morning meet.

Now this emendation not only contradicts all belief,

which invariably surrenders the midnight to injured spirits, but also asserts that the hour when night is growing into day is more solemn and more fit for such visitations than that to which rustic faith assigns all the terrific forms which are contained in his creed. In restoring the original lines, I may, in my own justification, observe, that the ballad will be rendered more true to superstition, and likewise more consistent with itself:

Awake, she cried, thy true love calls,
Come from her midnight grave.

The speed of this ghost was unlike that of all sister spirits, if it rose at midnight, and did not stand at its victim's bedside sooner than the hour when night and morning meet. The real cause of the alteration was, perhaps, the want of correspondence in rhyme between the second and fourth lines: it is rhyme to the ear—I mean, there is an uniformity of sound which gratifies the ear in singing equal to the most established rhymes, but there is no rhyme to the eye—and to oblige the eye, the poet spoiled his ballad. Nor was this so trivial a matter in days when the natural beauty of poetry was under the control of a mechanical arrangement of sounds: Dr. Johnson treated with contempt one of our finest lyrics—"Ah, the poor shepherd's mournful fate!" for a similar inequality of rhyme. In the other songs of Mallet there is more polish and much prettiness, and a

fine subdued modesty of language and thought, which make them favourites with all lovers of gentle and unimpassioned verse; but we have no more Williams and Margarets.

LORD BINNING.

I notice the song of Lord Binning more from a wish to say something respecting the false wit and unnatural humour of the composition, than from a belief that it entitles its author to a distinguished place among the lyric poets of his country. Ritson, with incredible infirmity of taste, calls Robin and Nanny a beautiful pastoral, and the poet a promising young nobleman. The pastoral beauty of a narrative rich in conceits cannot be great; and the poetical promise could be but moderate of one who coquetted with words till he made them wanton, and whose chief wish was the fame of scattering curious puns among the peasants of Scotland. Such lyrical specimens of wit may suit the meridian of a city, where all the strange meanings which pleasant conversation inflicts on words are felt and admired; but they are thrown away on the blunter intellects of country people, before whom illegitimate fancy scatters her false pearls in vain. In this respect the song of Lord Binning resembles some of the favourite lyrics of England, such as are clapped at theatres and encored in city clubs; and I assign him a rank of which he perhaps would have been proud, when I class him with

those wits who sought the pastoral of nature among dames

> Whose flambeaux flash against the morning skies,
> And gild our chamber ceilings as they pass,

and its current language in smart sayings and in snap conceits. All such writers forsake simplicity and nature, and must share, with a witty and exquisite poet, in the just censure which Burns passes on his pastorals:—

> Squire Pope but busks his skinklin patches
> Of heathen tatters.

Productions such as these present a knowledge of the town, and are full of pretty points and lively antitheses; but they breathe not of the homely heart of England:—they give us an image of city society, of mercantile or professional cleverness, of a choice club of wits, of a city of punsters. The mass of the English people are not of a literary turn, their hearts have long since ceased to respond to the sound of their ancient historic or romantic ballads, and the peasantry have not a literature of their own, like their brethren of the north; but were their old spirit to be reawakened, they would demand something of a more simple, and, perhaps, moving nature, than the subtleties of wit and the smartness of epigram. To start some lively or witty image, and pursue it through several stanzas, and then

close its career with a sally of fresh wit, or a gay conceit, may amuse the head, but it arouses not the heart. This manifest seeking after things smart, this continual desire to conclude every verse with something penetrating or acute, is most unhappily employed in the praise of beauty: we lose sight of the lady in pursuit of the wit, or cannot see her for the paste-pearls and imitation-jewels with which she is covered. Yet Robin and Nanny is a smart lively thing—a good lyrical joke, and I shall print it as a warning rather than as an example.

JAMES THOMSON.

Of the lyric powers of the author of The Seasons little more can be said than that his songs are distinguished for softness and grace—for an easy and equable flow of elegant language; and that, amid much kindliness of nature, and concise propriety of expression, he is seldom warm or impassioned. It is unfortunate for his fame as a lyric poet, that he wrote The Seasons and the Castle of Indolence. His Muse loved what was magnificent more than what was minute, and excelled in scenes of natural grandeur more than in images of domestic endearment and homely delight. The splendour of his other works eclipses the light of his songs. In looking on the rose, we forget the daisy; in gazing on the rising sun, we forget the beauty of the stars; in admiring a colossus, we turn not aside to examine a head carved out of a cherry-stone. He had a deeper sympathy

with nature, and found more solace in following her through all the changes of place and season, than in what a Cameronian not unwisely called "woman worship." Nature he loved to pursue "through summer's heat and winter's snow,"—through vales of spice, and over the mountains and the waves; but woman he was content to admire at a safer distance: he perhaps knew her fondness to be, as the poet found it, "a lovely and a fearful thing," and continued heart-free, though not fancy-free. His Amanda cannot be blamed for keeping her feet in spite of the witchery of songs which were more sweet than sincere, and had little warmth and less passion. He perhaps loved woman as he loved fruit, which he liked to come drop-ripe to his lips, without the trouble of plucking—and admired her as he did the apple, when he ate it off the branch with his hands in his waistcoat pockets.

His songs are indeed the careless productions of one employed on higher things, and express the feelings of a kind rather than of a warm heart, of a cultivated rather than of a gifted mind. He seeks not to embellish humble life, to picture out homely enjoyments, or to extract poetical grace and lyric beauty from the common employments and conditions of the people of his native land. His heart is not with Scotland when he sings; and though sprung from humble life himself, he shows no marks of his original condition—he is silent on the subject of the peasantry of his country—he has added nothing to their winter evening mirth or joy, and is almost the only instance of a northern poet whose songs

are not heard among the cottages of his dwelling place. But he has bequeathed us something better than song in those scenes of inspired description and sublime morality which make him an inmate of every house, and a benefactor to mankind.

TOBIAS SMOLLETT.

Those who only see in Smollett the author of some pure and ardent verses in praise of his mistress, and feel but the tender sweetness and native ease with which in "Leven Water" he has shed his affection over the scenes of his youth, do him great injustice. To have a full tasting of his indignant and pathetic spirit, we must know him in his "Tears of Scotland," and seek him in that passage in one of his prose tales, so inexpressibly touching, where his Jacobite exiles stand every morning on the coast of France to contemplate the blue hills of their native land, to which they are never to return. That pathetic lyric entitles him to take his place as the representative of a great number of authors of a peculiar character, whose songs have obtained some notice from the cause in which they were composed, but far more from their strength of humour, vigour of invective, their buoyancy of hope, and the pathos of their despair. To say that in his productions I see the full glory of Jacobite song, and that in lyric beauty he surpasses all his nameless brethren, is to say more than he merits, for in the higher qualities of lyric composition

his verses are inferior to some of those to which no author's name can be given. His grief is calm and contemplative; he sympathizes with human misery from principle more than from the heart; and the picture which he paints of the desolation which followed the steps of the Duke of Cumberland would suit the train of any conqueror, whether in Scythia or in Scotland. It is only he who feels wrongs deeply that can deeply sing them; and it is from him who has been hunted from cave to hill, who has seen his house destroyed, and his wife and children perishing, that we are to look for those bursts of nature, passion, and despair, which mark the time, the cause, and the people.

It is true, indeed, that the cause for which they suffered was that of tyranny against independence, of divine right against common sense and natural liberty, of superstition against the religion of the people's heart. But right is one thing and romance another; and a cause may be full of all which gives nerve or pathos to poetry, may have a thousand qualities by which imagination may be captivated and the heart deeply moved, without rational devotion or true liberty lending a single ray to brighten it. The principles of liberty, and the spirit of poesie, are different things: freedom of conscience, and the Bill of Rights, are no more necessary to the interests of lyric romance than prudence and self-control are useful to the dramatic interest of a tragedy. Government, after all, is but a subject of taste; and, to the multitude, it may be a matter of indifference whether they are mastered by many or by one: power will

always belong to the strong, and obedience must always come from the weak. For my own part I would rather be oppressed by one than by ten, if I am to be oppressed: the people of England, after many years of civil war, only exchanged the tyranny of Charles Stuart for that of a few military adventurers. Religion, too, is much the same as government, and the minds of men have formed many capricious varieties of faith out of a very clear, and simple, and well-defined system of practice and belief. The mantle of the Christian religion, like the coat of Joseph, is of many colours, and imagination has a large choice: from the plain and simple presbyterian, up to the head of the Romish church, there are firm believers, and there have been martyrs: yet belief is not truth; and martyrdom may be a mark of zeal, but cannot surely be accepted as a certain sign that the faith of the sufferer was right.

> How many perish for the truth
> O' the elephant and monkey's tooth.

But however the Jacobites may have erred against the light of human freedom, both civil and religious, and however much the heart of Scotland may have risen against the cause for which they struggled and bled, the time was soon to come when, from a powerful and a warlike body, they were to be broken and dispersed, their houses razed, their families left desolate, and their heads stuck up to blacken and corrupt in the public places. It was then, and not till then, that the

hearts of the people began to melt. They thought on the ruin of the lineal race of their ancient kings, on the desolation of many a noble house that had warred of old for Scotland's independence; and looking on the visible tokens of vindictive and cruel policy, the ravaged cot and the weeping orphan, the heart carried away the head, and a sympathy, deep and durable, was excited, which only subsided in the measures of mercy and of affection which followed the death of the last of the Stuarts. It is from this feeling that we are to look for the origin of many of our Jacobite songs; and though no doubt some of them are the productions of exiles, and sufferers, and partisans, others are the work of men who loved liberty as fondly, their native land as dearly, their religion as devoutly, and the constitution of the country as deeply, as the wisest that ever offered daily sacrifice to that judicious goddess Prudence. We have been told, indeed, that no lofty feeling belonged to those who shared with Prince Charles Stuart in his short career of victory, and in his long period of suffering and endurance; that they warred to repair the slights of the court, or the injuries of fortune, or from some other motive equally selfish. This may have been so with the few, but was it with the many? Can we forget the pathetic heroism of many of the sufferers, and, above all, can we forget what I am not ashamed to call the patriotic honesty of many thousands of the peasantry, who protected and saved their unhappy prince, while they knew that thirty thousand pounds would be the reward for betraying him? Let not the selfishness or the folly of a

few men give a colour to the conduct of others, who fought as few ever fought, and who suffered as few ever suffered, and who lost all that they had to lose of home or of country.

But let the Muse be answerable for her wayward strains, whether of folly or of wisdom. Like all romantic and indiscreet beings, she often lifts her voice in honour of the weak and in scorn of the strong; and had she seen the head of the Stuarts lifted, and their banner floating, as of old, she might, with an amiable inconsistency of principle, but in perfect keeping with poetry, have lent her strength to the weak, and turned her scorn on the prevailing. She will always prefer her art to her principles, and seek the elements of song rather from the heart than from the head. Many of these songs have little of party bitterness. It is wonderful what a tender root the hatred of the cause of the Stuarts struck in the north country; even the keenest of our sectarians, the Cameronians, continue to speak with a gentleness, almost approaching to affection, of the line of princes who persecuted them; and many well authenticated anecdotes might be told to prove how deeply the peasantry felt the hue and cry of blood which pursued so long the partisans of the exiled house. I have already said more than I wished to say: all that I desire to add is, the hope that no brave man will ever fight, and no enthusiastic poet ever sing, in the cause of tyranny, with half the bravery, or with half the beauty, our ancestors have done in the cause of the Stuarts.

LADY GRISSEL BAILLIE.

To Lady Grissel Baillie's claims on our regard as a lyric poetess have been lately added, by the publication of her Memoirs, claims of a deeper though less shining kind, those of a dutiful daughter and affectionate wife. She was the child of Patrick, Earl of Marchmont, and wife of the well known George Baillie of Jerviswood, whose widow she died in 1746. Her lot was cast in very stormy times, and her lively invention was employed in scenes of far deeper importance than in impressing humour and pathos on song. Her turn for domestic pleasure and home-bred mirth was only equalled by her sense of propriety and her regard for prudence; and she found her skill in song not only soothed her own cares, but was a solace amid times of sore trial to her friends, with whom her genius and her virtues were in high esteem. She left many unfinished songs; for domestic cares made the visitations of the Muse seldom, and the stay short: but the song on which her fame in verse must depend is one able enough to maintain it. Those who look in "Were nae my heart light I would dee," for fine and polished language, or for a very high strain of sentiment, must be content to be disappointed. But it has other attractions, of a more popular and equally durable kind; it is written in the fine free spirit of the rustic poetry of Scotland—the words are homely and the ideas are na-

tural; yet they are such as the heart of poesie only would have suggested; and they who seek to add deeper interest to the story, or to endow it with more suitable ideas, or more natural language, will owe their success as much to good fortune as to meditation. It is now an old favourite, though songs, with more melodious verse, and a more embellished style, have followed thick and threefold; yet its careless and artless ease, and simple, but graphic imagery, will continue to support its reputation against its more ostentatious associates. The description of a disappointed lover, depressed in spirit, and fancy-touched, will keep possession of every heart, and be present to every eye, till some poet exceed it in truth and felicity.

> And now he goes daunering about the dykes,
> And a' he dow do is to hound the tykes;
> The live lang night he ne'er steeks his e'e,
> And were nae my heart light I would dee.

She was among the first of a band of ladies who have contributed largely to the lyric fame of Scotland; nor is she the only one of her name who has given Scottish song the advantage of female genius. There is another who has breathed into it a far deeper pathos, and a far richer spirit: need I say it is Joanna Baillie?

MISS JANE ELLIOT, AND MISS RUTHERFORD.

I have classed these two poetesses together, not from the resemblance of their genius, for that was essentially different, but from the circumstance of their having sung on the same subject, and with much the same success—the fall of the youth of Selkirk on the field of Flodden. The fame of both songs has been widely diffused. They were imagined for a while to be old compositions, but there was no need to call antiquity to the aid of two such touching songs; and I have not heard that even an antiquary withdrew his admiration on discovering them to be modern. They are each of them remarkable for elegiac tenderness: with one it is the tenderness of human nature, with the other that of allegory, yet the allegory is so simple and so plain that it touches the most illiterate heart; and though it expresses one thing by means of another, all must understand it. Nature, however, is the safest companion in all that seeks the way to the heart, and with nature the song of Miss Elliot begins and continues. The history which tradition relates of these songs is curious: each has an origin after its kind, and one may almost read in them the readiness with which honest nature submits to the yoke of poetry, compared to the labour of reducing what Spenser calls a "dark conceit" to the obedience of verse.

Of Miss Elliot's song, Burns says, "This fine ballad

is even a more palpable imitation than Hardyknute; the manners, indeed, are old, but the language is of yesterday." I am not certain that our national lyrist has laid down the surest rule to ascertain the antiquity of verse; the language of traditional song is softened and modernized to correspond with current speech, while its manners, and images, and story, may remain whole and untouched. All oral literature is liable to the fluctuations of popular taste, and the change of language, from which written works are exempt; much of the original beauty of the expression may be impaired or improved, and the touches of native grace, or vagrant beauty, may be lessened or altered; yet still the original character, and manners, and imagery, will sustain less of a change than the language which conveys them. The arrow, whose gray goose wing was wet in the heart's blood of Montgomery, in the modernized ballad of Chevy Chase, was a shaft fledged from a swan's wing in the ancient copy—the vivid and natural image of swift death is the same in both.

The song of Miss Elliot was composed from the impulse of some ancient verses; and if there be such a thing as the transmigration of poetic soul, it has happened here. The most acute poetic antiquary could not, I think, single out, except by chance, the ancient lines which are woven into the song—the simulation is so perfect. The line with which it commences, "I've heard a lilting at our ewes milking," is old, and so is the often recurring line which presses on our hearts the desolation of the Forest. Now, admitting these lines to be old, can

we say that the remainder of the song has not in every line, in language, and image, and sentiment, the same antique hue, and spirit, and sound? The whole comes with a cry in our ears as from the survivors of Flodden Field; and, when it is sung, we owe little to imagination when we associate it with the desolation of the Forest, and hear in it the ancient wail of its maids and matrons.

For the song of Miss Rutherford a much more romantic origin is assigned: we are never satisfied with the simple account which genius is willing to give of the rise of its labours: whatever is uncommon must be done in an uncommon way. It is said that a young gentleman who had lost his way among the pastoral vales and hills of Selkirkshire came at last in sight of a young shepherd seated by a stream, watching his flocks, and playing on his pipe. Many wild and original tunes were played by the gifted shepherd, and his wondering auditor had the skill and the cunning to carry away one of the sweetest airs of this Selkirkshire Orpheus. He had next the good fortune to meet with Miss Rutherford, and the rustic air was married to very elegant verse. Such is the story which once told has been often repeated. The song, however, bears evidence of Miss Rutherford's knowledge of the fragments which Miss Elliot brooded over to such good purpose: and from the truth and simple beauty of these reliques I must suppose that the air was popular, and that the young gentleman found what had never been lost, but was living in the knowledge of thousands.

I am the less sorry that the ancient song has passed

into oblivion, since it lingered long enough to give rise to two such strains of tenderness and pathetic beauty. A still remembered fragment contains an affecting image, and shows that the old minstrel had poured his lamentation from a lady's lips:

I ride single on my saddle.

Miss Jane Elliot was the sister of Sir Gilbert Elliot of Minto, ancestor of the present earl: I have not heard that any other strain, either of mirth or of sorrow, flowed from her pen. Miss Rutherford was the daughter of Rutherford of Fairnalie, in Selkirkshire, and wife of Mr. Cockburn of Ormiston. "She has been dead some time," says an authority equally accurate and concise. "Even at an age advanced beyond the usual bounds of humanity, she retained a play of imagination, and activity of intellect, which was almost preternatural at her period of life. Her active benevolence keeping pace with her genius, rendered her equally an object of love and admiration."

I have not noticed the fragments from which these songs have been written with the wish of lessening the original merit of the two compositions. The merit of reviving or renovating an old song in the ancient spirit seems at least equal to the skill required to create a new one: it is enough that the fancy has to submit to a species of vocal imprisonment in composing a song as an echo to an air, without suffering the farther constraint of subject, language, and imagery.

SIR GILBERT ELLIOT.

When the poet Cowper reproached the Caledonian songs with their frequent birks and braes, his acquaintance with our lyrics perhaps was limited to some of those tainted with pastoral affectation, where, it must be confessed, the braes and the birks, and the pipes and the crooks, justify the satire of the Englishman. But as he became farther acquainted with our lyrics, he would find that our love of our native scenery, and skill in using it to give locality and season, and of course truth, to poetry, was not their only merit; that they indeed possessed a graphic truth, and simplicity, and humour, much akin to his own: he, therefore, in the succeeding editions of his works, omitted the reproach. In like manner, the charge of pastoral affectation, which has been urged with so much truth against some of our songs, fails in a great measure of its aim—the shaft has flown nearly all its flight, and falls harmless—where nature prevails against art, where truth is so blended with fiction that, like a lowland stream, the water is concealed by the fragrant broom which grows on its banks. The song which has given the name of Sir Gilbert Elliot a place among our lyric poets is one of great beauty; and the sheep-hook and the fresh garlands are forgotten in the strain of natural sorrow produced by neglected moments and unrequited love. It is one of the last and the best efforts of the pastoral Muse. I know

not whether to account it good fortune or design, which made the name of the heroine sound so like that of the family residence; but I am willing to believe in the prophetic strain which makes the cliffs echo, for many a later year, the song of "My sheep I neglected."

On Minto crags the moonbeams glint,
Where Barnhill hew'd his bed of flint,
Who flung his outlaw'd limbs to rest
Where falcons hang their giddy nest,
Mid cliffs from whence his eagle eye
For many a league his prey could spy;
Cliffs doubling on their echoes borne
The terrors of the robber's horn,
Cliffs which for many a later year
The warbling Doric reed shall hear,
When some sad swain shall teach the grove
Ambition is no cure for love.

As if it had not been enough for Sir Gilbert Elliot and his sister to write two of our favourite lyrics, and enjoy the credit of such compositions, by special grace and good fortune they have also each obtained a separate and lasting compliment in verse; the first in the Lay of the last Minstrel, and the latter in Marmion.

One of those flowers whom plaintive lay
In Scotland mourns as "wede away."

But Miss Rutherford may be supposed to divide the compliment with Miss Elliot, and she deserves it.

MRS. JOHN HUNTER.

The death-song of the Cherokee Indian has done more for the fame of Mrs. Hunter as a poetess than all her other lyric compositions. She is known, indeed, under her maiden name of Home, as an associate in the same task with Miss Elliot and Miss Rutherford; but her version of the Flowers of the Forest is deficient in simplicity, and presents none of those affecting and visible images of desolation which charm me in the others. It is elegant and flowing; but what is elegance or melody compared to natural pathos, and to those tender and moving pictures of domestic sorrow which are acknowledged by every heart that has felt or can dread calamity? Nature will always assert her right to rule over the heart, and will never surrender her influence to the most ingenious or most imposing allegory: when she wishes for tears or for sighs, she will never seek for them by general expressions or elaborate similes, but endeavour to obtain them by a few simple and minute touches:—to be pathetic, we must be particular.

But for her failure in the "Flowers of the Forest" we have obtained ample compensation in the death-song of the Indian: a song of a marked and original kind, bold and wild, and inexpressibly mournful, filling the heart with a kind of savage inspiration, which exalts us while we hear it sung, and gives us a species of lyric delight unknown before. We feel at once that Scotland has no

claim in inspiring the strain, that it breathes of another and a wilder land, and brings the boundless lakes and interminable forests of America, and her plumed hordes of martial barbarians, before us. The hero of the song has been painted by West, gazing at the light of life leaving the eyes of General Wolfe; and he has been sung by Campbell, as

A stoic of the woods, a man without a tear:

but neither the painter nor the poet has presented a more vivid picture of indomitable courage and heroic firmness than has been drawn by this soft and feminine hand. In the wild and enthusiastic ballad of Macpherson's Farewell, we have the dauntless glee, the contempt of death, and the confidence in courage and in strength, which characterize the Scottish highlanders; and we have something not very dissimilar in the song of Hughie Graeme; but they want that strange wildness, that native flavour of the country, that peculiar cast of thought and imagery, by which the latitude of their birth-place may be laid down with all the nicety of geography. After this praise I shall be thought insensible to the merits of her other lyrics when I can only discover in them an agreeable flow of verse, and a discreet propriety of expression. None contain any of those bright and imperishable verses which we are induced to learn and are delighted to remember, and which, like the Cherokee Indian, when we wish our children to have them by heart, we find they have learnt already.

ALEXANDER ROSS.

Of Alexander Ross, author of the Fortunate Shepherdess, Scotland knows much less than it ought; and I am afraid my praise will not help to invite a fastidious reader to his pages, where homely fidelity of painting will but poorly atone for an ill-told tale and an uncouth dialect. I sought his book in the Scottish lowlands, but it had not found its way from the bosom of Buchan either by the more visible progress of trade, or by that kind of chance intercourse which the country holds with the town through travelling sellers of songs, and ballads, and histories; it has not therefore become popular among the peasantry, for whose perusal it was composed. The author, a man of education, allowed his eye to be bounded in its range by his native hills, and sought manners and language from no purer or more poetic source than the rustics who surrounded him. He was content to take the world as he found it; he copied nature with all her warts and moles, and was rude and unseemly not from negligence but from principle. He had little imagination, if imagination consists only in the creation of new and splendid things, in evoking, like a dreamer, something bright and unsubstantial, in conjuring up a phantom with seven heads and ten horns; nor had he much imagination, if imagination, by a soberer definition, be the power of creating something in strict conformity to acknowledged superstition and belief, and in extracting

poetry from the common pursuits, and opinions, and feelings of man—from the change of seasons, and the aspect of the universe. But he had an observing eye and a rough and a ready hand, and has contrived to please a large district by his skill in reflecting, in the natural mirror of verse, a distinct and agreeable image of the peasantry, with their pursuits and opinions.

That he brought to the service of the lyric Muse much original vigour of thought, happy selection of language, and natural and unstudied elegance of expression, is more than I am ready to say. His songs expand into poems, and he never can satisfy himself with a brief story, and a rapid sketch: he never read the memorable conclusion of the poet,

——Brevity is very good
Where we are, or are not understood.

Yet he never seems too long to a rustic audience; and as it was for their applause he wrote, he was satisfied with attaining it. He wove their curious sayings and their flashes of rude wit into verse, and they rewarded him by an honest laugh, and endured with a patience, which merited a more inspired poet, his interminable lyrics.

MISS JENNY GRAHAME.

There is a kind of song which without aspiring after pathos or wit, or seeking to win our hearts by impassioned

expression or lofty sentiment, is nevertheless well worthy of notice and of the popularity which it has obtained. I mean songs which seek to instruct us in the humble duties of life, and desire to teach us the way to happiness, and pleasure, and peace. Having strayed into the paths of wisdom and of prudence, the Muse seems ashamed of singing the charms of regularity and economy with her own voice, and she accordingly utters her "saws" and her "instances," her admonition and her reproof, by the lips of the old and the devout. A mother, or rather a grandmother, instructs her volatile descendant in all the wiles of her sex, and unfolds for her use an extensive experience of her own, mingled and seasoned with the long-gathered wisdom of others. "To live in misery, but to dine on plate," seems the enviable distinction these doucè lecturers aim at; true love is treated as a dream, and the substantial charms of opulence are the beginning and the end of the song. The enthusiasm of youth is made, by a more judicious Muse, to endure the counsel of a less interested tongue. An ancient relative, or a venerable aunt, proceeds to initiate a maiden on the point of escaping from her teens into the mysteries of coquetry, and directs her choice of a lover by the weight of his purse and the extent of his possessions. All the images of rustic grandeur which knowledge can command, and all the advantages, and they are not few, which gold can give, are passed in glittering review before her, and are contrasted, by the malice of ancient wit, with the sorrows of poverty—with an empty coffer and a cold hearth, the constant

accompaniments of inconsiderate love. Gold, in the estimation of this grave monitor, becomes, like the cestus of the goddess,

> An ambush of sweet snares, replete
> With love, desire, soft intercourse of hearts,
> And music of resistless whisper'd sounds,
> Which from the wisest steal their best resolves.

In a similar strain of prudence, yet with something of a sarcastic sneer, Allan Ramsay sings:

> There's meikle good love in bonds and bags,
> And gold and silver's a sweet complexion;
> And wit, and worth, and virtue in rags,
> Have tint the art of gaining affection.

And Robert Burns, whose "o'erword" was not always "Prudence," sings still more seriously,

> O thoughtless lassie! life's a fight:
> The canniest gate the darke is sair;
> And aye fu' handed fighting's best—
> A hungry care's an unco care.

While the author of Tibbie Fowler concludes his satiric song with all the bitterness of a disappointed admirer:

> Be a lassie e'er so black,
> Gin she hae the name of siller,
> Set her up on Tintoc tap,
> The wind will blow a man 'till her.

At the head of this sober kind of song, since Ramsay and Burns belong to the higher departments, I can with great propriety place Miss Jenny Grahame, the authoress of a very clever lyric called "A Mother's Advice to her Son." This lady, indeed, puts no spicery in the cup of wedlock, and has by heart, like the fifth husband of the Wife of Bath, all the evil chances, sacred and profane, which marriage has brought on man. To these she adds the caution of proverbs and the precepts of experience. I would advise any youth, who has not perfect confidence in his own capacity of judging for himself, to avoid singing, as he goes to be married, the sorrows which this Dumfries lady has discovered under the joys with which Hymen, as with roses, has strewed the bridal couch. I may add of this lady, that she has left a very respectable fame behind her for humour and for naïveté. I wish she had left some more songs: our district has not overflowed with lyric verse, and with the exception of the author of "There's nae luck about the house," my native county has no claim upon me for the character of a lyric poet of any note or eminence.

REV. JOHN SKINNER.

Of the songs of John Skinner those most popular are Tullochgorum and John of Badenyon: the first is gay and sprightly: the second belongs to that monitory class which to the interest of a pleasant story adds two or three words of good counsel in a manner between the

grave and the humorous. The one will always be more or less popular, from the life and animation it lends to the air with which it is united; and the other has an equal chance to endure, since youth with enthusiasm and hope will often read its own story in the disappointments of its hero, and seek similar consolation in its own bosom, or, as many interpret the song, in the meek and quiet repose of religion. But the Muse of Skinner had the same infirmity as that of Ross, or had the same hope of a patient audience; she sings with so much satisfaction to herself, that she knows not when to stop; and if all lyric bards were to sing in the same lengthened strain, the world, if it did justice to all, would find no time for graver pursuits. This practice of prolonging our delight till even delight becomes painful belongs more peculiarly to the Muse of the north of Scotland; and the name of Geddes may be added to that of Skinner and Ross, as an instance of encouraging a story to grow beyond the bounds within which all lyric poetry should be restrained, to which the melody of music is intended to be added. The "Wee, wee Wifiekie" of Geddes, like the "Ewie and her crooked Horn" of Skinner, though longer than a willing singer would wish it, is altogether a very humorous performance, and I should not like to be the person who grew tired while it was either singing or reciting. Burns was a warm admirer of the songs of Skinner; but all the praise which the living lavish on the living, I am afraid, must be taken with some abatement. "Tullochgorum," he says, "is the best Scotch song Scotland ever saw." There is certainly a dance of

words, and great animation; but, to understand the compliment, we ought to know whether the poet ranked it in reference to all, or according to its kind. I certainly should not place it at the head, or near the head, of Scottish song; yet I hope no one will take advantage of my candour when I say, that I know not what I might have done had Skinner lived now, and expressed himself as favourably of some of my verses as he did of those of Burns. A man's vanity rises in arms against his judgment, and it is well that it is so: he must be very deficient in enthusiasm whose judgment is always clear; and he would make but a sorry friend who said only what he thought, and estimated all with the gravity of one sitting in judgment.

ALEXANDER SKIRVING.

Of Alexander Skirving, author of "The Chevalier being void of fear," I cannot well say the half I know, or I know not when we should have done with laughing; for besides his gift at song-making, which was considerable, he was one of the wittiest and most whimsical of mankind. Much of this peculiar character is visible in his song where he sings of the contest between the rebel and royal forces like one regardless of the result, who scorned one side and mocked the other, and derided them both together,—and received the reward of all such candour, for one party picked his pocket, and the other expressed a desire to shoot him. It was

for a long while the only song concerning those struggles which could be sung without giving offence to either side, and was and still is immensely popular; yet this popularity cannot last: like all other verses which are made on passing events, it must be content to fade gradually away from the recollection, as the battle which it celebrates grows more distant, and its allusions begin to be forgotten. It has still, however, a long lease of fame, for the memories of the north are very tenacious; and an event which shook the kingdom, and filled so many families with mourning, will be often dwelt upon by the old, and recalled by the young. This spirit for poetry and humour was inherited by his son Archibald, a drawer of characters both with pencil and pen; whose history, and opinions, and verses, and paintings, would fill a volume, and a volume too that would deserve to live.

JOHN LOWE.

They who wish well to the fame of John Lowe may wish him known only by the pathetic song of "Mary's Dream;" but other poetry has gone abroad, and though its inferiority lessens not the excellence of that exquisite production, it very materially impairs our opinion of the original powers of the author. He was indeed a lover and a writer of verses from his youth; and if we may credit the oral testimony of the peasantry of his native place, some of his early songs are still lingering among the Galloway mountains. But he was only once a true poet, and probably never once a true lover; and the coy-

ness of the Muse was only equalled by his inconstancy as a man. In the song of "Mary's Dream" he tells the story of a youth who perished at sea; and the heroine dreams or imagines she sees the form, and hears the voice, of her lover announcing his untimely fate. It is no abatement of the beauty of the song to be told, as I have been, that the same story was current in prose before John Lowe was born; nor can I consent to suppose his fame at all lessened, even were it proved, as I have heard it very strongly asserted, that it is only a revisal and improvement of an older production. I have known men's memories play them strange tricks in the antiquity of song, and I receive all such assurances with hesitation and doubt. It is the duty of a poet not to invent superstitious beliefs, but to use them according to their peculiar spirit; and he who first gives them a poetic dress, and employs them for the purpose of embellishing a true love story, has ever been held from the days of Homer as the original proprietor. In the same manner, should a poet find the fragments of some ancient and departing strain, if he gather them together, and shed over them the reviving dews of his own fancy and feelings, till they become a fair and a living body, I know not why his merit should be reckoned inferior to that of its first creator. This, or something like this, was my answer to a gentleman who told me he was present when one of the young ladies of Airds went to the kirk with her bridegroom, and while the young men were whispering and naming her for the heroine of Mary's Dream, an old man came forward, and assured them that he had sung the

song when a boy, and that it was an old song then. But whether old or new, or more probably a mixture of both, it bids fair to continue a favourite; and I scarcely know a song that contains so many popular qualities—a moving tale with all its natural and supernatural accompaniments, steeped in a stream of melody.

The claim of Logan to the sweet song of the Cuckoo, the claim of Hamilton to one brilliant speech, and of John Lowe to one exquisite song, have all been disputed; though nothing can be surer than their several rights—yet the world cannot well be blamed for entertaining suspicions. When we see a song written in a free and a noble spirit, and hear a speech eloquent and flowing, logical and persuasive, and know that the other productions of the poet are cold and spiritless, and that the orator never spoke another word worthy of notice, we imagine they have begged or borrowed their honours, and unwillingly allow them the credit of having had one solitary fit of inspiration, one short visit from the Muse of poetry or eloquence. When Burns speaks of Lowe, he says he read a poetic letter of his from America, to a young lady, which seemed to relate to love; the great poet often speaks hastily, and is often wrong where one word of inquiry might have set him right: but though he calls John, Alexander, he was right to treat that cold, and heartless, and conceited epistle, with contempt or indifference. A man who retracts his promise and revokes his vows for no better reason than his own inconstancy is a contemptible scoundrel, and yet he becomes still more abject and pitiable when he sits coolly down to

clothe his villany in verse, to polish his own hardness of heart, and to give the wings of poetry to his own infamy, that it may fly over the world and proclaim it east and west. That Lowe's vanity was greater than his want of principle cannot well be doubted, since it obliged him to reveal his own dishonour: we read his lines with pain and dismiss them with contempt, and scarcely afford a sigh for the disastrous close of his life. But family shame, and disappointed hope, and the bitterness, it may be, of self-reproach, revenged the cause of injured love, and laid him in an untimely grave.—Let those who desire to part with him in peace read his Mary's Dream, a song which few have equalled and none excelled.

WILLIAM JULIUS MICKLE.

Were I to say that the lyrical fame of Mickle depended on that very fascinating song, "There's nae luck about the house," I should do him a manifest injustice. That he is chiefly known in the north as the author of that song only is very true, and it was but lately his claim was ascertained as surely as all such dubious things can be: but he is also the author of some dozen and a half of the sweetest ballads in the collection of Mr. Evans. The poet, indeed, had no wish to own these hasty and somewhat unequal productions; and, with a desire to let them win their way as the works of the antique Muse, he encumbered their language with all the idle garnishing of superfluous letters. Now, if one

quote, or pretend to quote, from some old manuscript, such embarrassments to the reader may be defended; but all oral or remembered things must come stript of idle letters—their presence betrays the imposture. Throughout the whole number there is a family resemblance, and they are all alike marked as the offspring of a tender heart; their descriptions are simple and graphic, their sentiments natural and affecting. They are all emblazoned, too, with old manners, and old customs, and old deeds, in the spirit with which a true poet will employ his antiquarian knowledge. I am glad of this opportunity of rendering back to departed genius the ornaments of which it too carelessly despoiled itself; and it may be a warning to many who imagine they can estimate their own capacity and decide what works of theirs posterity will honour: for in my opinion his hastiest effusions are his best, and in those heroic and romantic legends he breathed out a far more free and natural strain than in some of his more elaborate productions.

Of his "Nae luck about the house" I am obliged to speak, and I speak unwillingly, for I confess I am not quite satisfied with his claims of authorship. He has written nothing else in the peculiar style of that composition, and we know that the reputation of having written it was long enjoyed by another. Now the claim of Mickle depends on the conclusion which we may choose to draw from the fact of the song, with variations, being found in his handwriting. Many of the songs which Burns transcribed, or dressed up for the Museum, have

been mistaken for his own compositions: and in like manner, Mickle may unwittingly have made another person's song his own, which he had only sought to correct or embellish. These, after all, are but doubts;—doubts which every one is free to express who feels them. He has made out a better claim to the merit of writing that delightful song than any other person; and since it is an old favourite now, and as all knowledge of its origin may be fairly reckoned to be departed, I am ready to believe that it owes to him most of those charms by which it cannot fail to captivate attention, so long as the happiest language in which truth and nature can be expressed has any sway over men's hearts.

JOHN LOGAN.

While the songs of some other poets have risen into a popularity which they hardly seem to deserve, those of Logan have by no means received such notice as their merits claim. As the author of the Ode to the Cuckoo, his name stands justly high; the sweetness, the neatness, and concise beauty of that composition, cannot well be rivalled; yet it must not be disguised that many assign it to Michael Bruce, a young poet, who, though he died in the blossom of his hope, has received some compensation by the general sympathy with which his name is regarded, and by the fame that his promise, rather than his performance, has obtained. I confess, in a matter of gratuitous conjecture, I cannot see why

we should impeach the testimony of Logan in his own favour; or why he was incapable of producing such a strain, when he had written some which fairly rival it. Are we to suppose, because he introduced into the works of Bruce some of his own poetry without acknowledging it, that at the same time he privately and basely taxed the productions of his friend to grace his own future works? I cannot believe it, and till I see more reason I will not. If he was sweet, and neat, and concise in the ode to the Cuckoo, he was not less so in some of his other lyrics: he united great sensibility with great nicety of judgment, his style was free and flowing, and his felicitous brevity of expression was favourable to lyric composition.

His taste, however, was not always accurate, and his lyrics are sometimes infected with the Arcadian plague of shepherds and shepherdesses. The idly feigned poetic pains of imaginary personages make little impression on the multitude; and a song, which gives back to the heart or eye of the singer nothing of either nature or manners, has a small chance for lasting admiration. I always distrust the excellence of verse which, professing to look like nature, is too fine and too beautiful for the comprehension of the commonalty. The princesses and gentlemen of pastoral verse would think the primeval curse had fallen upon them were they transported from their balmy groves and blooming fields to a wild hill side among the mountains of Scotland. But Logan is no frequent sinner in the pastoral style; and the beauty of his verses on Yarrow Braes has many admirers who

forget, in the pathetic flow, that he ever sighed at the feet of a shepherdess, or heard the note of the nightingale north of the Tweed. It is singular what affection genius has long entertained for the little stream of Yarrow, and how many gifted spirits have united to celebrate it. Yet beautiful as many of the lyrics are which shed their enchantments on its bank and stream, I am not sure but that the most sweetly beautiful are not native at all, being breathed from southern dales. When will my native stream of Nith obtain or deserve the distinction of such strains as the Yarrow Unvisited, or the Yarrow Visited, of Wordsworth?

ROBERT BURNS.

A lyric poet, with more than the rustic humour and exact truth of Ramsay, with simplicity surpassing Crawford's, and native elegance exceeding Hamilton's, and with a genius which seemed to unite all the distinguishing excellencies of our elder lyrics, appeared in Robert Burns. He was the first who brought deep passion to the service of the lyric Muse, who added sublimity to simplicity, and found grace and elegance among the cottages of his native land. The beauty and the variety of his songs, their tenderness and truth, their pathetic sweetness, their unextinguishable humour, their noble scorn of whatever is mean and vile, and their deep sympathy with the feelings of humble worth, are felt by all, and acknowledged by all. His original power, and his

happy spirit, were only equalled by his remarkable gift of entering into the characters of our ancient songs, and the skill with which he abated their indelicacy, or eked out their imperfections. No one felt more fondly the presence of beauty, could express admiration, hope, or desire, in more glowing language, or sing of the calm joys of wedded love, or the unbounded rapture of single hearts and mutual affection, with equal force or felicity. All his songs are distinguished more or less by a happy carelessness, by a bounding elasticity of spirit, a singular and natural felicity of expression, by the ardour of an enthusiastic heart, and the vigour of a clear understanding. He had the rare gift of expressing himself according to the rank and condition of mankind, the stateliness of matron pride, the modesty of virgin affection, the querulousness of old age, and the overflowing enthusiasm and vivacity of youth. His simplicity is the simplicity of strength: he is never mean, never weak, seldom vulgar, and but rarely coarse; and his unrivalled power of clothing his thoughts in happy and graceful language never forsakes him. Capricious and wayward as his musings sometimes are, mingling the moving with the comic, and the sarcastic with the solemn, all he says is above the mark of other men—he sheds a redeeming light on all he touches; whatever his eye glances on rises into life and beauty, and stands consecrated and imperishable. His language is familiar, yet dignified, careless, yet concise; and he touches on the most perilous or ordinary themes with a skill so rare and felicitous, that good fortune seems to unite with good

taste in carrying him over the mire of rudeness and vulgarity, in which, since his time, so many inferior spirits have wallowed. His love, his enthusiasm, his devotion, his humour, his domestic happiness, and his homeliest joy, is every where characterised by a brief and elegant simplicity, at once easy to him and unattainable to others. No one has such power in adorning the humble, and dignifying the plain, and in extracting sweet and impassioned poetry from the daily occurrences of human life: his simplicity is without childishness, his affection without exaggeration, and his sentiment without conceit.

The influence which the genius of Burns has obtained over the heart of Scotland is indeed great, and promises to be lasting. He alarms, it is true, very sensitive and fastidious persons, by the freedom of his speculations and the masculine vigour of his mode of expression; but these are rather the casual lapses of the Muse, the overflowings of an ardent heart and unwearied fancy, and a love of vivid illustration, than a defect of principle, or an imperfection of taste. Like a fine race-horse, he cannot always stop at the winning-post; like a beautiful stream, he sometimes overflows the banks; and his genius resembles more a tree run wild, than one trimmed and pruned to decorate a garden walk. When speaking of his prospect of future fame to a friend, he said he depended chiefly on his songs for the continuance of his name; and his decision seems correct. Not but that I think, in all his earlier poems, he displays greater force and freedom of genius than he any where exhibits in his lyrics; but then these brief

and bright effusions are learned by heart—are confided to the memories of the people—and come down from generation to generation without the aid of the press or the pen, to which longer and more deliberate productions must be trusted. In this way alone would many of the best of Burns's songs be preserved, perhaps his humorous lyrics the longest—we naturally prefer mirth to sorrow: the source of tears is deeper than that of laughter; and duller heads and less sensible hearts, which could not partake in his emotions of tenderness and sublimity, would assist in preserving whatever increased the joy of a bridal feast, or the merriment of rustic festivity.

But with all his impassioned eloquence in the presence of beauty, with his power of exciting emotions at will, whether of pleasure or of pity, and with all his delight in what is lovely and inspiring, he had little of that elevated and refined spirit which contemplates beauty with awe, and approaches it with reverence. Of this pure glory and hallowed light his lyrics possess nothing. The midnight tryste and the stolen interview—the rapture to meet, and the anguish to part—the whisper in the dark—and all the lavish spirit of nocturnal enjoyment, correspond more with the warmth than the elevation of love. He looked not on loveliness as on a pure and an awful thing: he drew no magic circle of lofty and romantic thought round those he loved, which could not be passed without lowering them from stations little lower than the angels; but he clasps them in his arms, and lavishes on their condescension all the

rapture of unrefined joy. His rapture is without romance; and to the charms of his compositions he has not added that of chivalry. He has no distant mode of salutation—he seeks the couch rather than approaches the footstool of beauty; and the sparkling wine, the private chamber, and the "pulse's maddening play," are to him that inspiration which devouter minds have invoked by prayer and humiliation. When one of the ladies who had felt the sorcery of his conversation as well as of his Muse said, with more naïveté than delicacy, that no man's eloquence ever carried her so completely off her feet as that of Burns, she expressed, very happily, that influence which the passionate language of poetry has over a susceptible heart: but still this fails to let us into the secret of the charms he used; and the lady may have lost her self-command by the witchery of a gross as well as an aerial eloquence. But if he was not under the spell of chivalry in the intercourses of love, he was occasionally under an influence which sobered down the selfish impetuosity of passion—which imparted a meekness to his joy, and a reverence to his language. I am willing to believe that a deep feeling of devotion, constant in his youth, and flashing back on him by fits and starts during the period of his short but glorious career, interposed to hallow his thoughts, and restrain that torrent of passion which overflowed in all his productions.

He laid down rules for lyric composition which he did not always observe, and seemed willing to restrain others from pruning the luxuriance, or improving the

sentiment, or heightening the story, of ancient song, while he was ready to indulge in it himself. Of the many fine songs which he wrote, a large proportion are either avowedly or evidently conceived in the spirit, and executed in the feeling, of others: he retouched many, restored many, and remodelled many; but he retouched few without improving them, restored none without increasing their beauty, and remodelled none without introducing some of those electric touches of delicacy, or humour, or tenderness, for which he is so remarkable. It would extend to a great length the character which I am endeavouring to draw, were I to seek to justify my assertion by an examination into all the sources from which he gathered the materials of song—or to point out fragments which he completed, verses from which he borrowed, or songs which he imitated. He seemed, indeed, to take particular delight in completing the old and imperfect songs of his native country: without much old world lore, with no great thirst of research, without any particular sympathy for the old simple style of our ballads, he has exercised his fancy and displayed his taste among the reliques of ancient song to a greater extent than is generally known. Though nature is exhaustless, I must confess that Burns, who is somewhat little less than nature herself, appears to have felt at last the decay of fancy in the service to which his love of Scottish music called him. To expect that a spirit so wayward could endure, year after year, to measure out lyric verse according to the prescription of all manner of melodies, is to me sur-

prising. That he could stay till he entered into the feeling of the air—till he extracted from bagpipers and fiddlers all their varieties of the melody which was to be united to verse; and then make a notorious sacrifice of vigorous meaning to empty music, and endure the criticism of men, whose skill in the science of sound was less to be disputed than in the science of sense, is one of those instances of condescension and willing humiliation which are unfrequent in the history of Robert Burns.

ROBERT TANNAHILL.

The man who breaks out from the fulness of his heart into voluntary numbers, and seeks relief in poesie from the matter with which he overflows, is a poet of nature's own handiwork; and we may expect from him a free and original strain, and some addition to the stock of popular pleasure. The rods of the false magicians wrought their enchantments as well as the rod of the prophet; and we have much poetry which comes from a lower source than inspiration; but the enchantments which the false magicians wrought could not stand, since they were not of God; and the poetry which is laboured out by mechanical skill alone cannot survive, since it springs not from nature. With the finest ear and the nicest skill in language, and with learning lending knowledge and power, a man cannot write true poetry; for all these acquirements will only

carry him to where poesie begins; and though he may speak with the voice of the Muse, her heart, which warms, and animates, and exalts, will be absent; and though his aspirations may be correct and melodious, they will want the curious ease and happiness of natural poetry. He will give no fresh impulse to our feelings; he will add no new joy to the stock of the old: he will but re-echo more impressive sounds which have been heard before; give a new look to an old sentiment; and flourish in the faded flowers and the tarnished finery of verse.

Though I have no hesitation in admitting Tannahill to the fellowship of the born spirits of lyric verse, and in acknowledging his right to take rank with some of our popular song writers, I am not so ready to allow him the rare merit of originality which some have boldly claimed for him, nor am I prepared to believe that he has equalled Burns, or even approached him, either in pathos or in passion, in true love or in tenderness, in spirit or in humour. His songs, which are numerous, are chiefly remarkable for the nicety and skill with which they are measured out to re-echo the airs to which they are sung: they have been composed by one entirely possessed by the melody to which he wished to wed his verse; and this I am afraid has lessened the ardour of the poet, while he solicited words and distributed them out by the suggestion of sound. They name the name of love indeed, but they express none of its deep emotions: they speak of imaginary pains, and present us with midnight interviews; but there is

little of the overflowing affection of youthful hearts; if they speak, they speak what other lovers have said before them; they meet without rapture, and part without passion. His songs are descriptions of scenery rather than pictures of true love; the subject of his verse is lost in the exuberant luxuriance of landscape; and he is so anxious to leave no tree, or stream, or flower unsung, that he fairly buries the painting in the framework. It would be unjust to deny that some of his happiest songs are excellent after their kind; but they are excellent after the manner of others: he has discovered no new region of delight into which he could take the votaries of song; the ways in which he leads them go through no enchanted or untrodden ground; and he lives rather in the neighbourhood of the Muse than in her company.

This absence of some of the chief charms of lyric verse in the compositions of Tannahill may be sought in his way of life—in his love of singing to suit the tastes of a club of west-country wits, rather than in obeying the dictates of his own heart. It is idle to listen to the calls of others, unless the poet feels the call within himself; what he produces to rule and measure will look like a paste gem beside a diamond, when compared with those unbidden and unsolicited strains which gush up from time to time from the recesses of his own bosom. The coldness of his love compels him to seize on every descriptive circumstance to swell the amount of his verses—auxiliaries become principals—and the subordinate parts usurp the foreground. The west of Scot-

land seemed to imagine, that having produced Burns, it was destined to produce, at stated periods, a succession of humble bards endowed with genius like that of its favourite son. Tannahill was therefore hailed as a star at least, under the influence of the planet Burns; and the glimmerings of his weak and inconstant light were looked upon as the dawn of something more full and resplendent. But with a kind heart, and considerable poetic power, he was unequal to the task of consoling the west country for the untimely fate of Burns; and what for himself was far more unfortunate, he wanted firmness of mind, and independent pride of heart, and proud consciousness of genius, to support him against the cold regard of the world; and having written to please others rather than to gratify himself, he was not prepared for evil fortune, but sank under mortified ambition and disappointed hope.

The fall of this young poet presents a lesson for those to read who imagine that the gift of genius and all its accompanying sensibilities is a blessing and a pleasure: it is indeed a blessing, when it comes with corresponding power of mind and excellence of judgment; when he who possesses it can form a proper estimate of his own capabilities; can prepare himself for the insolence of criticism and the neglect of the world; and can answer scorn with scorn, and find in his own heart abundance of consolation;—when with the wisdom which swayed Burns, he sings to please himself, the surest way to please others. But it is a curse and a torment when it is bestowed alone, and good judgment is with-

held: like a ship with more sail than ballast, or a startled bird in the dark, it will sink in the waves, or flutter to death; or, like the wild steed of which Lord Byron has so exquisitely sung, it will gallop till it burst its heart. I should be one of the last to ask for genius the protection of the great; but in the case of Tannahill a little patronage might have been spared—for little would have done; and the shame of sending him in poverty and in sorrow to an untimely grave would not then have been added to the national reproach which the history of the inimitable Burns has brought on our country.

RICHARD GALL.

Richard Gall is a sweet and melodious writer, easy and flowing; but his flow is without depth, his sweetness without strength; and with all his ease he scatters none of those careless graces—gives us none of those electric touches which awaken new trains of association, and introduce us to new pleasures. His songs have been read and sung; but they want the power of remaining on the memory as a charm: they are not better than others of the same character which have preceded them; they give no new turn to thought; they embellish the oft-told tale of love with no original imagery; and they offer no new incense at the shrine of beauty. He looks, with Burns, on the daisy, over which he has trod—but no sublime and moral emotion arises in

his mind; and he looks on the mouse hastening from the ruin of its stubble nest—but it awakens no images of terror or of pity: the one is but a weed, and the other but a mouse—and so they are to the mass of mankind. I accuse him not of being insensible to the charms of nature, and to the presence of beauty; for his verses entitle him to rank with those who could strike off a fac-simile of what is visible to the eye. He can see, but he cannot imagine; he thinks of spring like a farmer, and sees in the earth, whose bosom is heaving with new life, only the hope of a good crop of corn. In his love he is quiet and tranquil; his joy is moderate, and his sorrow is without tears. I cannot give him greater praise, and therefore I will spare him any farther censure.

HECTOR MACNEILL.

Of all ladies Fame is the most fascinating and faithless: she will smile on a man to his face, run with her light before him, and blow her trumpet at his approach; but the moment he is gone, and the green sod is above him, she extinguishes her torch, casts her trumpet aside, and forgets his name with as little remorse as the buxom wife of Bath forgot that of her third husband when she meditated her fourth marriage. Yet she is not always so unjust and inconstant. There are others to whom she was frugal of her smiles, and whose names she seldom pronounced while they lived; but over whose graves she scatters her flowers, and sounds her trumpet, and

whom she summons men to admire with all the fervour of a virgin who has lost her love, or of a wife bereaved of the husband of her heart. In which of these situations Hector Macniell stands it requires little skill to determine. I remember, when a boy, the numerous editions of his songs and his tales, the applause they received, and the fame which they brought the author. No fame was ever so suddenly achieved; no praise was ever so loudly proclaimed: and yet what reputation has experienced so great a fall?—what poet would think it praise to be told that he sang like the author of "Come under my Plaidie," or "My Boy Tammy?" Yet Scotland welcomed him as she never welcomed man before. —To see in "Will and Jean" a spirit worthy of ranking with Burns, or of outrivalling that truly vigorous and Hogarthian production, "Watty and Meg," was a delusion such as never fell on the eyes of man since the spell in the wizard's book, which made a cockle-shell seem a gilded barge.

Of his songs some account must be given, and his songs are the best of his works. They have much softness and truth, an insinuating grace of manner, and a decorum of expression, with no small skill in the dramatic management of the stories—for they are all conceived in the express character of our popular lyrics. They are innocent and strictly moral: his Muse is no leaper and dancer—she never runs half breathless in the twilight round the ricks of hay, nor laughs in the dark, but conducts herself with a propriety worthy of a better inspiration. But who, in the pursuit of na-

tural ease of expression, simple energy of thought and concise purity of language, ever made such marvellous mistakes as the author of My Boy Tammy? He mistakes the chirping of the grasshopper for the voice of the eagle—the gliding of the brook for the heaving of the ocean—and the tongue of a school-boy, expressing a sneaking regard for curds and cream, for the voice of a man uttering the language of love. His simplicity is utter weakness, and neither man nor woman nor child could speak so far below the mark of manhood as some of the swains of Macniell. The very idea of falling in love implies a conscious manliness—a sense that wit and form are grown nigh to man's estate: but what mother, with either a mother's anxious heart or intrepid tongue, would ask a son who had the sense to seek a wife such silly questions as the mother of Tammy? and what son that had any hope of a beard would have replied in the words of that harmless simpleton?

There is perhaps no grace in lyric composition so difficult to attain as simple grace of expression: but simplicity implies the presence of sense and wit, and is accompanied by strength, and gives depth to pathos and force to humour. But to separate the poetry from the prose of life, as honey is gathered from the weed, and to pluck the sweetest flowers of poesie from among the thorns and brambles of humble life, was a flight beyond the power of Macniell. There is a rich and a noble simplicity—but there is also a poor and a mean simplicity; and as vulgarity is often mistaken for rustic elegance, so is meanness of language for elevation and strength. When

he imagines he imitates the language of innocence, he becomes tame and ludicrous; and instead of rivalling the homely strength and agreeable naïveté of the ancient songs, he produces a lyric unworthy of soothing children. He seems to have mistaken human nature, and seeks among a shrewd and a keen-sighted people to renew the age of gold and the language of helplessness and ignorance. His "Come under my Plaidie" is a story which was found without the cost of invention; it is the common tale of a woman, fond of fine dresses and soft beds, preferring age and riches to youth and poverty: but it is told without humour; and the author neither increases our mirth nor excites our scorn by an adventure, in telling which, no one save himself could have escaped doing both.

REV. WILLIAM MOREHEAD.

The men of Galloway of old claimed and enjoyed the dangerous honour of composing the vanguard of the royal armies of Scotland, and for many centuries confined their ambition to this often-envied distinction: they claimed no other honours, and were satisfied with the silent fame which industry and hospitality added. Though living in wild and picturesque regions, their pastoral hills and romantic streams, their poetic superstitions and their lovely women, never elevated them into verse; so that, unlike the natives of the neighbouring counties, they have few remains of literary glory to show. In

song, the spontaneous offspring of the heart, they have, till of late, produced little; and were we to withdraw from the great joint stock of national pleasure all the songs which the men of Galloway have contributed, who would be sensible of the diminution? In truth, the lyric authors of that extensive district, having each of them produced one good song, seem to have exhausted their powers; or, like the cornerake, whose first cry in the season is sweet, but whose single and invariable note becomes palling and monotonous, we cannot endure the continuance of their strains, since, like echoes, they become fainter and less distinct than the original sound.

There is one Galloway song, however, a production of very singular merit, which, if not quite original in conception, is original in execution, and cannot well be spared from among our national lyrics: its loss would be like rending a green bough from a living tree—I mean "Bess the Gawkie." William Morehead, the author, was minister of the parish of Urr, in Galloway: he was a vigilant and able professor, and a man of ready wit and gay keen humour. That he was the author, I had the assurance of my Father—a man fond of collecting all that was characteristic of his country, and possessing a warm heart, lively fancy, benevolent humour, and pleasant happy wit. To him I owe much of the information concerning song which I have scattered over these pages; and in all things connected with our national poetry, so much did our tastes correspond, that in recording my own opinions I am only expressing his. A poet himself, and a correct judge of poetry, his curiosity was unbounded and his

reading extensive. He had by heart many an historical and romantic tradition, many a moving story, and many an ancient verse; and so well did he feel, and so happily could he utter what others wrote, that I have heard many say they would rather hear him read songs than others sing them. With Morehead he was personally acquainted, and he also knew Nathaniel Mackay, the minister of Crossmichael, who, he informed me, was the author of "Nae Dominies for me, Laddie"—a clever but unequal song. All my inquiries, and they have not been few, confirm his assurance.

Bess the Gawkie is a song of original merit, lively without extravagance, and gay without grossness—the simplicity is elegant, and the naïveté scarcely rivalled. The maiden's complaint of the numerous caresses of her lover—"O Jamie, ye ha'e monie ta'en," is the reproof of one pleased and innocent; and the triumphant taunts of Bess, and her concluding song of merry indifference, cannot readily be matched. That Morehead wrote nothing more, having written once so ably, is very strange. How he contrived to disobey that great internal call, that craving of the heart and the fancy to break out into voluntary song—an impulse which men call inspiration, surpasses my understanding. Morehead, Lowe, Mackay, and others—all men of Galloway, all poets, are all single-song men, but Morehead is the most original; and as his writing has increased our rational amusement, I am sorry he did so little for us, when he could do it so well.

ALEXANDER WILSON.

Alexander Wilson is well known as the author of one of our most popular rustic poems, Watty and Meg. In his homely and vigorous style, his scorn of all ornament, his directness of purpose, and his rough energy, he stands opposed to Macniell; and he is likewise opposed to him in matter as well as in manner, for his song is of mirth augmented by liquor, of public-house pastime and tumultuous joy, of the fury of female passion and domestic infelicity. He scorns douce morality and regular decorum, and loves to hear the pint-stoups clatter amid

Laughing, sangs, and lasses' skirls.

He has been excelled by none in lively graphic fidelity of touch: whatever was present to his eye, and manifest to his ear, he could paint with a life and a humour which Burns seems alone to rival; but in all the higher qualities of the poet he was decidedly inferior—he had none of those sudden bursts, as of lightning from a cloud, which kindle us up and exalt and lift us above the earth. What he beheld he could describe, but what he found low he could not raise; he could run on the ground, but he could not ascend: while manners and men sat for their pictures, he could paint; but he was unable to speculate upon human character and action, and his skill lay in augmenting mirth rather than in moving to pity or to tears.

His genius merited a happier fate than to be exiled

among the deserts of North America. He undertook a work of great labour—the American Ornithology; and with his gun, and his pencil, and his pen, he traversed forests, skirted mountains, crossed rivers, and at last perished from anxiety of mind and fatigue of body, from unrewarded industry and ungratified hope.

SIR ALEXANDER BOSWELL.

With a deeper relish than most men for humour and wit, and with a spirit sprightly, elate, and companionable, Sir Alexander Boswell had not the happiest art of communicating his emotions to song; his mirth seems forced, and his humour wants readiness of motion—it is more cumbrous than keen. He inherited from nature much constitutional glee, and had an accurate eye for measuring the whims and the follies of mankind; but the wit and the humour, which shake the company's sides when the wine goes round, have seldom flowed into song. The wit which comes at the call of merry companionship, and the wit which attends on meditation, may be of the same species; but the one is perishable, and the other enduring.—To shine in conversation is one thing, and in verse another, though the poetic element belongs to both. To Boswell's aid the Muse seems to have come with reluctance—he wishes to be witty and to be humorous, but his wit is not happy, and his humour wants ease and grace. His want of success arises not from unwillingness to descend to the region of rustic

merriment; the truth is, he sometimes descends too far, and laughs himself, whilst he fails to move others.

His song of "Jenny's Bawbee," partly the renovation of an ancient lyric, is lively and satirical, and has obtained public favour. Jenny draws up her suitors in ludicrous array, and touches off their characters with much acuteness; but there is little that is new, and less that is happy—the humour is the humour of situation only: we laugh, but it is at the ludicrous predicament in which some of the lovers are placed, not at the sallies of humour with which they are assailed. His "Auld Gudeman, ye're a drucken Carle," is natural and diverting; and we cannot avoid smiling at the union of folly and age in the old pair, or at their hasty quarrel and hastier reconciliation. The whole is, however, somewhat vulgar: the simplicity has been praised, though it is bald and ordinary; all may be simple that is natural, but all that is natural is not elegant.

Boswell's heroic songs are few; there is some ardour in the way in which he summons his heroes to the field, but he has drawn no new picture of heroic enthusiasm, he has thrown in no martial mirth, no unexpected pathos. He knows what he ought to do—he aims at it, but he wants the patience or the art to stamp off with vigour or life his own conceptions. I am grieved to think that his life, a valuable one to his lady and his children, was cast away in a dispute about an idle verse: his blood ought not to have been spilt, save in a graver quarrel than could arise from the end of a foolish song. I feel more

for him who survives than for him who perished; he cannot always have a hot brow and a determined hand.

I now bid farewell to the acknowledged authors of Scottish song. Though I am sensible of having omitted some whose reputation many may think might have secured them a place, and admitted others whose genius some may question, I cannot accuse myself of having excluded any whose works bear the mark of original spirit, nor included any whose genius seems doubtful. I might have swelled the amount of lyric poets with the names of some to whom obscure traditional testimony assigns a few of our favourite songs, but I thought it best to be silent where I could not be sure. There is still, however, a class of authors to whom we are largely indebted for an ever-increasing stock of lyric pleasure, and to whom we owe many songs of first-rate beauty and excellence—I mean the anonymous authors, who, like nightingales, are satisfied with charming us without being seen, and whom we may question as Wordsworth so beautifully questions the bird of summer:

O Cuckoo, may I call thee bird,
Or but a wandering voice?

To this source of lyric pleasure I have to acknowledge myself indebted for as deep a knowledge of those strains of pathos or humour which the heart of Scotland breathes, as to the works of known poets; and they who desire

to form an estimate of the varied genius of our national songs must make themselves familiar with many verses of mirth or sadness to which no author's name can be added. We owe them, I imagine, more to the unlettered than to the educated Muse, to the hasty or vagrant impulse of some bright or clouded moment of human life, when the heart could no longer contain itself, from its fulness of sorrow or of joy. They seem all of one family, and they involve all the defects and excellences of our known poets; they have a meekness in their mirth, a modesty in their love, a calmness in their sorrow, a quiet humour, and a gravity amid their most extravagant strains, which give us an image of the nation. Yet in many parts they possess a very peculiar and striking beauty, altogether their own, or which they share not to any very prominent extent with others—I mean the religious awe which is breathed so softly through some of our rudest lyrics. Amid the throbbings of mutual love, or round the hearth of domestic affection, this devout feeling circulates; and yet it is employed with such happy skill, that religion rather lends grace than character, rather embellishes by allusion than by a more direct mode—she becomes the auxiliary rather than the principal. This singular union seems perfectly consistent with the character of the nation—it is a species of religious chivalry; and in its presence warmth never overflows into indelicacy, nor simplicity of expression into coarseness or vulgarity.

Of the living authors of lyric verse it is my wish to

be silent—personal esteem might mingle with my criticisms; and while I imagined myself judging with candour, and estimating with care, I might only be recording my own affections and partialities. I might, indeed, praise the rapidity, the fire and martial animation of the author of Marmion, the elegance and pathos of Campbell, and the witty grace and native tenderness of Joanna Baillie—I might say there was much truth and much nature in James Hogg, and that if Lockhart sang as freely and warmly of the chivalry of Scotland as of the Moors and Spaniards, his name would be one of the foremost in lyric verse.

Of the songs which I have myself written—out of many I have admitted a few, and these are mostly such as had already escaped from my hand, and found their way as old or new compositions into a variety of collections. Were I to admit many, men might accuse me of vanity in seeking place too readily for my own among the works of more gifted spirits; and were I to exclude all, I should be open to the charge of idle pride, or ridiculous affectation. I am not even sure that I shall escape the censure of malevolent criticism in the middle course I have pursued: my wish in this was to please others rather than to gratify myself, for where could I wish my songs to be but among those of my native land?

My wanderings in the wilderness of song now draw to a close. As I have not altogether satisfied myself with the history which I have given of our lyric verse, or with the characters of our song-writers, I am not vain

enough to believe I shall please others. I have done my best—it has been my wish to speak with freedom, to examine with care and to estimate the merits of each song by the pleasure it gave to others as well as to myself. In accepting the word Song in its extensive and ancient Scottish meaning, I follow not only my own judgment but that of others whose opinions in all matters of taste are worthy of respect. I have not been over studious respecting the arrangement of the songs: the dates of their composition could not always be obtained; yet that seems the most natural order for their publication; and some such plan I would much more willingly follow than the common mode of classing them under their several heads of the pathetic or the humorous. An arrangement so capricious could not well be followed in songs so various as ours, where the tender and satiric, the pathetic and the merry, come often in the course of a couple of verses. In extracting songs from some of our old ballads I have sought to preserve the story and to express it in the language of the age to which it belonged: such has long been the practice in the north with poets as well as singers; and I hope it will be felt that in abating the length of these national rhymes I have not lessened their graphic truth or dramatic vigour. I am less afraid of incurring blame for the pains I have taken in rendering many of our old songs more acceptable to the eye of delicacy than I found them; and in ekeing out fragments and mutilated verses as much as possible in the sense and spirit of the old. They who desire our old verses to remain in dust or impurity will

be displeased perhaps with the freedom of my amendments; and they who seek out with a sensitive delicacy for the Muse's transgressions against strict decorum may think I have sympathised more than I ought with the free language and open mirth of our ancestors. There would be more wisdom in offending than prudence in pleasing such unscrupling or scrupulous persons—the thorn grows on the same branch with the rose; and many over-warm or indecorous expressions are interwoven with

> Measures which the gray-hair'd minstrels sing,
> When they make maidens weep.

In the notes, I have sought to illustrate our lyrics by fragments of neglected or forgotten song, by story, by anecdote, and by criticism. I have gleaned intelligence from some hundreds of volumes, and obtained information from many sources. It would encumber the page, and embarrass the reader, were I to name every work and every source, written or oral, from which my knowledge is drawn. Such idle display of research would not secure me against the charge of inaccuracy by those who choose to prefer it, nor against the imputation of dulness by those (and may they be few!) who find me tedious and uninstructive.

I commenced this desultory Introduction by addressing myself to ONE who has done more for the instruction and delight of mankind than any author since the days of Shakspeare. I imagined him seated beside me, and

listening, with his usual benevolence, to all I had to say on a subject with which he was far better acquainted than myself. If I have omitted all allusion to his presence as I wandered along, it was more from tenderness to him than from any idle vanity of my own. It could not be supposed that all I said would merit the sanction of his judgment or his taste; and had I named his name at every will-o'-wisp turn of the narrative, and at every opinion I expressed, it might have been surmised that I wished to burthen the quick with the dead, like the twin brothers in the pathetic story of Pitscottie. I had no such wish. When the sloe hung its fruit under the leaves of the plum, the sharp flavour betrayed the parentage; and the bloom of the hare-bell was not mistaken for that of the rose, though mingled with it in the garland. I would that the work were more worthy of the subject and of him under whose name I have sought to shelter it;—but I have done my best, and if the half of what I have performed obtains the approbation of my native country, I shall be content.

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

London, February, 1825.

Nae snaw wi' crimson will I mix,
To spread upon my maiden's cheeks;
And syne th' unmeaning name prefix,
Miranda, Chloe, Phyllis:
I'll bring nae simile from Jove,
My height of extacy to prove;—
Nor sighing—thus—present my love
With roses and with lilies.

SCOTTISH SONGS.

SIR PATRICK SPENS.

THE king sits in Dunfermline town
Drinking the blude red wine:
O where will I get a skilfu' skipper
To sail this ship of mine?
O up then spake an eldern knight,
Sat at the king's right knee,—
Sir Patrick Spens is the best sailor
This day that sails the sea.

The king has written a braid letter,
And seal'd it wi' his hand,
And sent it to Sir Patrick Spens,
Was walking on the strand.
The first line that Sir Patrick read,
A loud laugh laughed he;
The next line that Sir Patrick read,
The tear blinded his ee.

O who is he has done this deed,
And told the king of me,
To send us out this time of the year
To sail upon the sea?
Be't wind, be't weet, be't snow, be't sleet,
Our ship maun sail the faem—
The king's daughter of Noroway,
O we maun bring her hame.

Make ready, make ready, my merry men a',
Our gude ship sails the morn.
Now ever alake, my master dear,
I fear a deadly storm;—
Yestre'en I saw the new moon
With the auld moon in her arm;
And if we gang to sea, master,
I fear we'll come to harm.

They hadna sailed a league, a league,
A league, but barely three;
When the sky grew dark, the wind blew loud,
And gurly grew the sea:
The sails were rent, the topmasts lap—
It was a deadly storm;
And the waves came owre the broken ship
And a' her sides were torn.

O where will I get a gude sailor
To take my helm in hand,
Till I go up to the tall topmast,
And see if I can spy land?

O here am I, a sailor gude,
To take your helm in hand,
Till you go up to the tall topmast—
But I fear ye'll ne'er spy land.

He hadna gane a step, a step,
A step, but barely three,
When a bolt lap out o' our goodly ship
And in came the salt sea.
O laith laith were our Scottish lords,
To weet their cork-heeled shoon;
But lang before the play was played,
They wet their hats aboon.

The ladies wrung their fingers white,
The maidens tore their hair;
And all for sake of their true loves,
Whom they'll see never mair.
O lang, lang may our ladies sit
Wi' their fans into their hand,
Before they see Sir Patrick Spens
Come sailing to the strand!

And lang, lang may the maidens sit
Wi' the gowd kames in their hair,
A waiting for their own true loves!
For them they'll ne'er see mair.
Half owre, half owre frae Aberdour,
It's fifty fathom deep;
And there lies gude Sir Patrick Spens
Wi' the Scots lords at his feet.

I believe, with tradition, that much of this ballad is very old; nearly as old, perhaps, as the time of its story, the days of the Fair Maiden of Norway. Many curious copies have been published; and Sir Walter Scott and Mr. Jamieson have augmented, from tradition, the original verses printed by Bishop Percy, to more than double the number. The catastrophe is not rendered more striking, though many characteristic incidents are added. Certainly the original story is more concise than ancient ballads commonly are; yet the new version of the narrative seems inconsistent. I can see little to make Sir Patrick weep in the second line of the verse, since he laughed loud on reading the first; for the command to sail to Norway is given in the first and repeated in the second. See how naturally the current of the story flows on in the old copy. The king's command is only expressed in the alarm of Sir Patrick and the orders which he gives his mariners; the ominous appearance of the double moon is mentioned with the awe of a sailor for supernatural occurrences—the ship sails—the predicted storm comes on; and, half-way from Scotland to Norway, she goes down with our Scottish nobles.

I have enriched the old and simple narrative, to which I have adhered, with a number of the new verses: to one to whom the ballad is new—if such a person can be found, the whole will appear struck out at the same time and with the same spirit. Imperfect as it perhaps is, we have little in the language which excels it; and I never heard of any one who was unmoved by it, except the singular author of Vathek: he calls it a silly

ballad. It is naturalized in Germany, by the beautiful version of Professor Herder.

It is imagined, by one who will seldom be found mistaken, that Sir Patrick was despatched by Alexander the Third to bring his grand-daughter from Norway; and such has ever been the traditional history which I have heard of this historical ballad. The fears of Sir Patrick for a winter voyage in the northern seas were common to Scotland: by a law of James the Third, no ship is allowed to be freighted out of the realm with staple goods, from the feast of Simon's-day and Jude, till the feast of the Purification of Our Lady at Candlemas.

In three various copies the ship sinks in as many different places: "Forty miles off Aberdeen,"—"Half owre, half owre frae Aberdour,"—and "At the back of auld St. Johnston's dykes." Such variations are ever found in our old songs before they are secured by publication from the innovations and changes of tradition.

Mony was the feather bed
That flotter'd on the faem,
And mony was the gude Scots lord
Gaed awa that ne'er came hame;
And mony was the fatherless bairn
That lay at hame greetin'.

This is one of the verses preserved by Jamieson; it is very characteristic.

GUDE WALLACE.

A lady sat by the greenwood side,
And sore she sighed, and thus she sang:
O where art thou now, gude Wallace?
O wight Wallace, ye tarry lang!
Gude Wallace took off his bright steel cap,
And dropt his mantle aneath his knee;
What tidings, what tidings, fair lady, he said,
And who holds rule in the low countree?

In yon hostel house are fifteen knights,
Thus to gude Wallace that lady sang,—
And they have taen him, black Douglas;
Their meanest word is head and hang.
Gude Wallace put on his bright steel cap,
And his brown sword in hand took he:
Now will I down to yon hostel house,
Those fifteen southron knights to see.

I'll win broad lands, said one proud knight,
O'er which a hawk would fail to flee;
A stately tower and a lady's love,
When I the gude Wallace shall see.
A loud laugh laughed he, the black Douglas—
I'll change my knighthood with a knave,
When you gain more from the gude Wallace
Than a single blow and a bloody grave.

Rude were the oaths, and red was the wine,
When a hasty step came to the door;
On a bloody field, thought he, black Douglas,
I've heard that stately step before.
Now forward churl! Sir Aylmer said,
Three buffets from me shalt thou dree,
Unless ye come from green Nithsdale
With news of wight Wallace to me.

Small news I bring from him, gude Wallace,
And grim the hero smiled and stern,—
He sends a churlish hand to bless
You with this burly blade of airn.
And he smote right, and he smote left,
He smote behind and he smote before,
Till all the fifteen southron knights
Lay drenched and dying in their gore.

Even as he stood and saw them lie,
Their blood yet on his sword was het,
When a flock of armed Englishmen
Leapt from their steeds around the yett.
Come forth, come forth, now wight Wallace!
This is the day that thou maun die.
I lippen more unto God, he said:
Although I be but ill-wordie.

That lady came—all aneath the moon,
With white hands held to heaven, she stood.
Till twelve of fifteen Englishmen
Even at her feet lay in their blood.

Ye'll run from me, quo' the wight Wallace,
When the bird can from the falcon flee;
And he followed fast him, the gude Wallace,
And smote them all by the greenwood tree.

He wiped his sword there, the gude Wallace,
And cleansed his hands and brow from blood;
I fight but faint, quo' the gude Wallace,
It's three days nigh since I tasted food.
I'd rather walk 'mid southron blood,
Wet-footed on the lily lea,
Than call the King of England lord,
With all the gold he can give to me.

Most part of the "Gude Wallace" seems of high antiquity. In endeavouring to unite the remains of several songs into one consistent story, I have sought to avoid offering violence to the meaning, the character, or the words,—dismissing only what was silly or vulgar, and retaining the simple and direct homeliness of the fragments. The measures of these mutilated songs or chants are various—the story is much the same, and the aim of all is alike, namely, to exhibit the personal prowess, undaunted daring, and unequalled strength of the favourite hero. One makes him strike up the door and confront his enemies; another gives him the garb, the vocation, and the privileges of a minstrel; while a third disguises him in the patched covering of a mendicant, and makes him, for his further security, "crook his leg and bow his knee," like the joyous beggar in the song of James the Fifth. I have adopted the way which

seemed most consistent with the open, undismayed, and generous courage of his character. As an example of the old verses of one of the fragments, I can only spare room for the following:—

"Though lame of a leg and blind of an e'e,
You're as like William Wallace as ever I did see."

It would seem that the personal strength, and stature and martial beauty of Wallace, had obtained more than justice in the songs of the minstrels and traditions of the people. His beauty is described as captivating as his sword was resistless, his swiftness of foot unmatched, and his courage and skill equal to the most marvellous deeds. As the time of his actions grew more remote, a fabulous strength and stature were ascribed to him, and an ancient and noble matron is made in the romance of Boece—who dare call it history?—to describe him to the king as possessing twice the strength of the renowned Bruce.

To his purity of motive, and fortitude and heroism, justice has been done by posterity; not alone in the cold parenthesis of Thomson,

(Great patriot hero, ill-requited chief!)

but by the eulogiums of the wise, the gifted, and the good. He has been accused of cruelty: read Edward's invasions, and then read the admonition of Wallace to the Monks of Hexmondsham, when he invaded England in his turn.—"Abide with me, for my men are evil-

doers, and I may not chastise them." He has been called savage, because the hero who saw his country deluged with blood, his father and brethren slain, his kinsmen treacherously murdered, and his wife burnt to death in her castle, exclaimed, when gold and lands were offered as the price of his faith,

> I love better to see the Southron die,
> Than gold or land that they can give to me.

He was a man much too noble for his times; and the crime of his death will for ever stain the memory of that martial but ruthless barbarian who spilt his blood for seeking to save his country.

I am sorry to deprive my favourite borough, Lochmaben, of the honour of having given a dinner to Sir William Wallace; but I was more anxious to conclude with something of a sentiment, than with a desire to dine. A fragment from which much of this song is selected was printed in Johnson's Musical Museum. The first verse makes him lament, that between him and his righteous king there was some ill seed sown. At that time there was no king in Scotland whom he would have wished to serve. The verse has no connexion with the rest of the story.

THE GABERLUNYIE MAN.

The pawky auld carle came o'er the lee,
Wi' many good e'ens and days to me,
Saying, Goodwife, for your courtesie,
  Will you lodge a silly poor man?
The night was cauld, the carle was wat,
And down ayont the ingle he sat;
My daughter's shoulders he 'gan to clap,
  And cadgily ranted and sang.

O wow! quo' he, were I as free
As first when I saw this countrie,
How blythe and merry wad I be!
  And I wad never think lang.
He grew canty, and she grew fain;
But little did her auld minny ken
What thir slee twa thegither were say'ng,
  When wooing they were sae thrang.

And O! quo' he, an ye were as black
As e'er the crown of my daddy's hat,
'Tis I wad lay thee by my back,
  And awa' wi' me thou shou'd gang.
And O! quo' she, an I were as white
As e'er the snaw lay on the dike,
I'd cleed me braw and lady-like,
  And awa' with thee I wou'd gang.

Between the twa was made a plot;
They rose a wee before the cock,
And wilily they shot the lock,
And fast to the bent are they gane.
Up in the morn the auld wife raise,
And at her leisure pat on her claise;
Syne to the servant's bed she gaes,
To speer for the silly poor man.

She gaed to the bed where the beggar lay;
The strae was cauld, he was away,
She clapt her hands, cry'd, Waladay,
For some of our gear will be gane!
Some ran to coffer, and some to kist,
But nought was stown that could be mist;
She danc'd her lane, cry'd, Praise be blest,
I have lodg'd a leal poor man!

Since naething's awa', as we can learn,
The kirn's to kirn, and milk to earn,
Gae but the house, lass, and waken my bairn,
And bid her come quickly ben.
The servant gaed where the daughter lay,
The sheets were cauld, she was away,
And fast to her goodwife did say,
She's aff with the Gaberlunyie-man.

O fy gar ride, and fy gar rin,
And haste ye find these traitors again;
For she's be burnt, and he's be slain,
The wearifu' Gaberlunyie-man.

Some rade upo' horse, some ran afit,
The wife was wud, and out o' her wit,
She could na gang, nor yet cou'd she sit,
But she curs'd ay, and she bann'd.

Mean time far 'hind out o'er the lee,
Fu' snug in a glen, where nane cou'd see,
The twa, with kindly sport and glee,
Cut frae a new cheese a whang:
The priving was good, it pleas'd them baith,
To lo'e her for ay, he gae her his aith.
Quo' she, to leave thee I will be laith,
My winsome Gaberlunyie-man.

O kend my minny I were wi' you,
Ill-faurdly wad she crook her mou';
Sic a poor man she'd never trow,
After the Gaberlunyie-man.
My dear, quo' he, ye're yet o'er young,
And hae na learn'd the beggar's tongue,
To follow me frae town to town,
And carry the Gaberlunyie on.

Wi' cauk and keel I'll win your bread,
And spindles and whorles for them wha need,
Whilk is a gentle trade indeed,
To carry the Gaberlunyie on.
I'll bow my leg, and crook my knee,
And draw a black clout o'er my ee;
A cripple or blind they will ca' me,
While we shall be merry and sing.

This exquisite song has obtained its royal author, James the Fifth, more fame among his subjects than all the use he made of his sceptre. It is supposed to commemorate one of his many intrigues; for the adventures of a military and amorous nature, which tradition ascribes to him, would fill a volume. But the disguises he assumed, and the night journeys which he undertook, are imagined to have been less for the purpose of redressing of wrongs, than with the wish to admire the beauty of the Scottish dames—and his admiration was sometimes carried to a great height, and threatened to cost him dear. It is related, more on the authority of popular belief than historical certainty, that James wandered about the country like a tinker, or pedler; and wove his adventures into many humorous songs, all of which, except one or two, are lost. Memory was never worse employed than in remembering verses which ought to have descended to oblivion; and in forgetting the songs of king James, if they had the merit of the Gaberlunyie-man. I know not where a more lively picture of living life, or a story of rustic intrigue, told with such naïveté and discretion, is to be found. Half of the ancient mirth has passed from our lyric poetry—we have more pathos and more passion; but we have no open laughter—no unextinguishable merriment.

WHEN BANNERS ARE WAVING.

When banners are waving,
And lances a-pushing;
When captains are shouting,
And war-horses rushing;
When cannon are roaring,
And hot bullets flying,
He that would honour win
Must not fear dying.

Though shafts fly so thick,
That it seems to be snowing;
Though streamlets with blood
More than water are flowing;
Though with sabre and bullet
Our bravest are dying,
We speak of revenge, but
We ne'er speak of flying.

Come, stand to it heroes,
The heathen are coming;
Horsemen are round the walls,
Riding and running:
Maidens and matrons all,
Arm! arm! are crying;
From petards the wildfire's
Flashing and flying.

The trumpets from turrets high
Loudly are braying,
The steeds for the onset
Are snorting and neighing;
As waves in the ocean
The dark plumes are dancing;
As stars in the blue sky
The helmets are glancing.

Their ladders are planting,
Their sabres are sweeping;
Now swords from our sheaths
By the thousand are leaping;
Like the flash of the levin
Ere men hearken thunder,
Swords gleam, and the steel caps
Are cloven asunder.

The shouting has ceased,
And the flashing of cannon!
I looked from the turret
For crescent and pennon:
As flax touched by fire,
As hail in the river,
They were smote, they were fallen,
And had melted for ever.

I found a part of this song in a rare volume, known among the curious in lyric lore by the name of "The Aberdeen Cantus." It appeared very corrupted, and certainly very obscure. It commenced by singing the

praise of Constantine, and his prowess against the infidels, and then drew a picture of a siege which the christian knights were enduring from the pagans.

Captains in open field
On their foes rushing;
Gentlemen second them
With their pikes pushing;
Engineers in the trench,
Earth, earth upthrowing;
Gunpowder in the mines
Pagans upblowing.

Portcullies in the ports
They are down letting;
Burghers come flocking in
To their hands setting;
Ladders against the wall
They are uprearing;
Women great timber logs
To the walls bearing.

These verses are very graphic. This is one of the first of our songs which ventured to sing of the weapons of modern warfare—pikes, petards, and gun-bullets. The author's name is unknown.

NIGHT IS NIGH GONE.

Hey, now the day's dawing,
The jolly cock's crowing;
The eastern sky's glowing,
Stars fade one by one;
The thistle-cock's crying
On lovers long lying,
Cease vowing and sighing,
The night is nigh gone.

The fields are o'erflowing
With gowans all glowing,
And white lilies growing
A thousand as one;
The sweet ring-dove cooing,
His love notes renewing,
Now moaning, now sueing,
The night is nigh gone.

The season excelling
In scented flowers smelling,
To kind love compelling
Our hearts every one;
With sweet ballads moving
The maids we are loving,
Mid musing and roving
The night is nigh gone.

Of war and fair women
The young knights are dreaming,
With bright breastplates gleaming,
And plumed helmets on;
The barb'd steed neighs lordly,
And shakes his mane proudly,
For war-trumpets loudly
Say night is nigh gone.

I see the flags flowing,
The warriors all glowing,
And, snorting and blowing,
The steeds rushing on;
The lances are crashing,
Out broad blades come flashing,
Mid shouting and dashing—
The night is nigh gone.

In seeking to render this beautiful song of Alexander Montgomery's into modern language, the peculiarity of the rhyme obliged me more than I wished to depart from the strict meaning of the original, and seek for matter more tractable. It is singular, that out of the fifty-six lines which compose the original, so far has pronunciation suffered a change, that only eighteen lines are spoken in the way in which the poet wrote them: all the others are deficient in quantity. The ancient mode of pronunciation would sound exceedingly ungraceful in song now; and when we have to sing conversa-ti-on and comman-de-ment, to fill up the measure of church-

melody in our translation of the Psalms of David, we are sensible that the superfluous syllables have long since died out of spoken language. Still I think many of our words might have been allowed to retain their ancient quota of syllables: "I bear a charm-ed life" is much better than "I bear a charm'd life; and admonish-ed and astonish-ed would have sounded better, and looked better, had they remained unabridged.

THE JOLLY BEGGAR.

There was a jolly beggar,
And a begging he was boun,
And he took up his quarters
Into a landart town:
He wadna lie into the barn,
Nor wad he in the byre,
But in ahint the ha' door,
Or else afore the fire.
And we'll go no more a roving,
A roving in the night;
We'll go no more a roving,
Let the moon shine e'er so bright.

The beggar's bed was made at e'en,
Wi' gude clean straw and hay,
And in ahint the ha' door
'Twas there the beggar lay.

Up gat the gudeman's daughter,
All for to bar the door,
And there she saw the beggarman
Standing in the floor.
And we'll go no more a roving,
A roving in the night,
Though maids be e'er so loving,
And the moon shine e'er so bright.

He took the lassie in his arms,
Fast to the bed he ran—
O hoolie, hoolie wi' me, Sir,
Ye'll waken our gudeman.
The beggar was a cunning loon,
And ne'er a word he spake—
But lang afore the cock had crawn
Thus he began to crack:
And we'll go no more a roving,
A roving in the night,
Save when the moon is moving,
And the stars are shining bright.

Have ye ony dogs about this town,
Maiden, tell me true?
And what wad ye do wi' them,
My hinney and my dow?
They'll rive a' my meal-powks,
And do me mickle wrang.
O dool for the doing o't,
Are ye the poor man?

And we'll go no more a roving,
A roving in the night,
Nor sit a sweet maid loving,
By coal or candle light.

Then up she gat the meal-powks,
And flang them o'er the wa',
The deil gae wi' the meal-powks,
My maiden fame and a';
I took ye for some gentleman,
At least the laird o' Brodie—
O dool for the doing o't,
Are ye the poor bodie?
And we'll go no more a roving,
A roving in the night,
Although the moon is moving,
And stars are shining bright.

He took the lassie in his arms
And gae her kisses three,
And four-and-twenty hunder merk
To pay the nurse's fee:
He took a wee horn frae his side
And blew baith loud and shrill,
And four-and-twenty belted knights
Came skipping o'er the hill.
And we'll go no more a roving,
A roving in the night,
Nor sit a sweet maid loving,
By coal or candle light.

And he took out his little knife,
Loot a' his duddies fa',
And he was the brawest gentleman
That was amang them a'.
The beggar was a clever loon,
And he lap shoulder height,
O ay for sicken quarters
As I got yesternight!
And we'll ay gang a roving,
A roving in the night,
For then the maids are loving,
And stars are shining bright.

This popular song is ascribed to our fifth James, and is said to be a strict poetical account of one of his adventures, rather than a pleasant tale of imaginary gallantry. I have always imagined the effect of the story impaired by the ostentatious summons of the four-and-twenty belted knights, and the display of personal finery. I wish he had neither winded his horn nor disencumbered himself of his humble garb. Horace Walpole says there is something very ludicrous in the picture of the girl's distress on imagining that her first favour missed the laird of Brodie, and had been squandered on a beggar. In making the chorus recur less frequently, I have only sought to free the story from an encumbrance which impairs its effect; and in abating the licentiousness I have endeavoured to retain all the humour. The royal author died of a broken heart in the thirty-first year of his age.

A gentleman of the north of Scotland gave me a rather

curious and lively variation of this royal ballad, in which the local allusions are drawn from a more northern source than in any other copy. Like the original, it is much more witty than delicate, and more lively than moral. I can find a modest specimen. The maiden, having disposed of the meal-powks, gives a glance at her unceremonious lover, and adds the following clever picture:

An ee like ony wild hawk,
A skin like ony swan;
A gallant grip, a gentle lip,
To be a poor man.
Ye may beg down the Dee bank,
Sae may ye down the Don;
Then come and dawte me twice a week,
And oftener gin ye can.

Many of our finest songs are injured in their sentiment and their story by the perpetual interposition of the chorus. In more ancient times, a multitude of voices seized on the repeated part, and spared the voice of the singer for exertion in the body of the song. Some of the border bards having composed scoffing ballads concerning Henry the Eighth, he complained to King James of the liberties which the Scotch had taken with his person and his morals. To this the royal poet returned a very characteristic answer: that he had great dependence on the discretion and delicacy of his people; and he rather imagined the offensive ballads to be the secret productions of his royal brother's own subjects.

SONG OF THE MAIDENS.

Ye ladies all of England,
  Now wring your hands and mourn;
For many a lord and lover
  Will fall at Bannockburn.
To win their spurs of silver,
  Go all your gallant grooms:
I see the gloves of ladye-loves
  Dance mid their dancing plumes.
Weep all ye dames of England—
  Your mirth has lasted long;
Now in your looks be sadness,
  And sorrow in your song.

And why should we have sadness?
  And wherefore should we sigh?
Saint George, for merry England!
  I hear our horsemen cry.
And see their war plumes waving
  Black as the raven's wings;
Our fatal shafts are flying—
  Hark to the thrilling strings!
And see King Edward's standard
  Floats on the buxom breeze;
Now all is merry England's
  That's girdled by the seas.

Here comes your lordly chivalry
All charging in a row;
And there your gallant bowmen
Let fly their shafts like snow.
Look how yon old man clasps his hands,
And hearken to his cry—
"Alas! alas! for Scotland
When England's arrows fly!"
Yet weep, ye dames of England
For twenty summers past;
Ye danced and sang while Scotland wept—
Such mirth can never last.

And how can I do less than laugh
When England's lords are nigh?
It is the maids of Scotland
Must learn to wail and sigh;
For here spurs princely Hereford—
Hark to his clashing steel;
And there's Sir Philip Musgrave,
All gore from helm to heel;
And yonder is stout d'Argentine;
And here comes, with a sweep,
The fiery speed of Gloucester—
Say, wherefore should I weep?

Weep all ye English maidens,
Lo! Bannock brook's in flood!
Not with its own sweet waters,
But England's noblest blood.

For see, your arrow-shower has ceased,
The thrilling bow-string's mute;
And where rides fiery Gloucester?
All trodden under foot.
Wail all ye dames of England,
No more shall Musgrave know
The sound of the shrill trumpet—
And Argentine is low.

Thy chivalry, proud England,
Have turned the rein to fly;
And on them rushes Randolph—
Hark! Edward Bruce's cry.
Mid reeking blood the Douglas rides
As one rides in a river;
And here the good King Robert comes—
And Scotland's free for ever.
Now weep, ye dames of England,
And let your sons prolong
The Bruce—the Bruce of Bannockburn,
In many a sorrowing song.

Many songs were made in honour of Wallace and Bruce: Fabyan quotes, and Caxton repeats, a verse of a popular lyric, sung by the Scottish maidens and minstrels in derision of the English, and in honour of the hero of Bannockburn. To eke out the old fragment in the feeling and language of that remote age was a flight beyond my power, and I have not tried it. What I have done, unequal to my wishes as it is, has given me an opportunity of noticing again the oldest specimen of our lyric poetry.

Baston, a Carmelite friar, accompanied Edward the Second to Stirling, for the purpose of singing of his master's renown and victory. He was taken prisoner, and paid, says Lord Hailes, a poet's ransom by composing a song commemorating the defeat of his countrymen. It is commended by Fordun in language which may be mistaken for censure; the poem, however, is much more curious than inspired. Of Sir Giles de Argentine, he says,

> Nobilis Argenten, pugil inclyte, dulcis Egidi,
> Vix scieram mentem cum te succumbere vidi.

The first line mentions the three chief requisites of a true knight—noble birth, valour, and courteousness. He was a hero of romance in real life. When the English were broken, and Edward fled, he was urged to retreat.—"It is not my wont to fly," he exclaimed; and spurring his horse, he shouted out—"An Argentine! an Argentine!" and died on the Scottish spears. Some of the songs of that period are referred to by Fordun. Four rude lines of scoffing verse were made on the siege of Berwick. "Edward the First punished," says the historian, "this untimely pleasantry by the slaughter of twenty-seven thousand Scots when he took the town." Women and children were probably included in this unlikely number; for I should as soon suspect Edward of ferocity, as the historian of falsehood. When Scotland sent only thirty thousand men to Falkirk and Bannockburn, it was not probable she could spare so many to defend Berwick.

LORD RANDAL.

Where have ye been hunting,
  Lord Randal, my son?
Where have ye been hunting,
  My handsome young man?
In yon wild wood, O mother,
  So make my bed soon;
For I'm wae, and I'm weary,
  And fain would lie down.

Where got ye your dinner,
  Lord Randal, my son?
Where got ye your dinner,
  My handsome young man?
O, I dined with my true love,
  So make my bed soon;
For I'm wae, and I'm weary,
  And fain would lie down.

O, what was your dinner,
  Lord Randal, my son?
O, what was your dinner,
  My handsome young man?
Eels boiled in broo, mother,
  So make my bed soon;
For I'm wae, and I'm weary,
  And fain would lie down.

O, where did she find them,
Lord Randal, my son?
O, where did she catch them,
My handsome young man?
'Neath the bush of brown brekan,
So make my bed soon;
For I'm wae, and I'm weary,
And fain would lie down.

Now, where are your bloodhounds,
Lord Randal, my son?
What came of your bloodhounds,
My handsome young man?
They swelled and died, mother,
And sae maun I soon—
I am wae, and I'm weary,
And fain would lie down.

I fear you are poisoned,
Lord Randal, my son;
I fear you are poisoned,
My handsome young man:
O yes, I am poisoned,
So make my bed soon—
I am sick, sick at heart,
And I fain would lie down.

I have had the good fortune to recover a verse which renders this very pathetic song perfect. I need hardly say, that it is the fourth; for the song is an universal

favourite, and the introduction of a new and characteristic verse cannot remain undiscovered. It is generally printed, and as generally sung, under the name of Lord Ronald; but I willingly follow, with Sir Walter Scott, the authority of an Ettrick forest copy in calling the hero Randal. One of the old verses seems to favour the name of Ronald, by laying the tragic scene farther north.

O, where have ye been, Lord Ronald, my son?
O, where have ye been, my handsome young man?
At the house of Marr, mother, so make my bed soon;
For I'm wearied with hunting, and fain would lie down.

There is, likewise, another verse worthy, perhaps, of preservation; but as it protracted the narrative of the story without adding much information, I have ventured to omit it.

O, what got your bloodhounds, Lord Ronald, my son?
O, what got your bloodhounds, my handsome young man?
They lapt the broo, mother, so make my bed soon—
I am wearied with hunting, and fain would lie down.

Sir Walter Scott has the more willingly followed the traditional variation, since he thinks it not impossible that the song may have originally regarded the untimely death of the great Thomas Randal, Earl of Murray. He perished at the moment when his services were most necessary to his country; and for this reason, per-

haps, our historians, and the prudent and accurate Barbour among them, impute his death to poison. Fordun repeats, and Boece, who believed every thing, echoes the same story, and charges his murder on Edward the Third. Tradition lends its aid, and minstrelsy has assisted, in spreading a tale which the research and wisdom of Lord Hailes have not been able to dissipate. He was said to have been poisoned by a monk.

A curious account of the death of King John introduces a monk, who was eminent for medical skill, boasting that he could give the king such a wassail as would make England rejoice. "Then went the monk into a garden, and found a toad therein, and took her up and put her in a cup, and filled it with good ale, and pricked her in every place in the cup till the venom came out, and brought it before the king, and knelt and said—'Sir, wassail—for never in your life drank ye such a cup.' 'Begin, monk,' said the king; and the monk drank a great draught, and took the king the cup, and the king also drank a great draught and set down the cup. The king was anon full evil at ease, and commanded to remove the table, and asked for the monk, and one told him he was dead, for his womb had burst asunder." The king survived this infernal draught eleven days. The adders from below the braken bush had the same effect on Lord Randal and his bloodhounds. There is a nursery song which transforms the handsome young hunter into a child, and poisons him by a false stepmother.

THE TWO RAVENS.

There were two ravens sat on a tree,
Large and black as black might be,
And one unto the other 'gan say,
Where shall we go and dine to-day?
Shall we go dine by the wild salt sea?
Shall we go dine 'neath the greenwood tree?

As I sat on the deep sea sand,
I saw a fair ship nigh at land,
I waved my wings, I bent my beak,
The ship sank, and I heard a shriek;
There lie the sailors, one, two, three:
I shall dine by the wild salt sea.

Come, I will show ye a sweeter sight,
A lonesome glen and a new slain knight;
His blood yet on the grass is hot,
His sword half drawn, his shafts unshot,
And no one kens that he lies there,
But his hawk, his hound, and his lady fair.

His hound is to the hunting gane,
His hawk to fetch the wild fowl hame,
His lady's away with another mate,
So we shall make our dinner sweet;
Our dinner's sure, our feasting free,
Come, and dine by the greenwood tree.

Ye shall sit on his white hause-bane,
I will pike out his bonnie blue een;
Ye'll take a tress of his yellow hair,
To theak yere nest when it grows bare;
The gowden down on his young chin
Will do to rowe my young ones in.

O cauld and bare will his bed be,
When winter storms sing in the tree;
At his head a turf, at his feet a stone,
He will sleep nor hear the maiden's moan;
O'er his white bones the birds shall fly,
The wild deer bound and foxes cry.

Ritson has reprinted from Ravenscroft's "Melismata" the dirge of the "Three Ravens;" and Sir Walter Scott has given us in the Minstrelsy "The Twa Corbies," a traditionary dirge, communicated by Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, Esq. of Hoddom. They are both wild romantic songs, and seem of the same origin. The Scottish version is more consistent; the English copy more touching: but the Corbies of the former speak and act in character; while the "fallow doe" of the latter breaks in upon the strict keeping of nature.

Down there comes a fallow doe
As great with young as she might goe.

She lift up his bloody hed,
And kist his wounds that were so red.

She got him upon her back,
And carried him to earthen lake.

She buried him before the prime;
She was dead herself ere even-song time.

God send every gentleman
Such hawks, such hounds, and such a leman.

Something of the same kind of supernatural feeling belongs to one of the early poems of Coleridge, and the superstition is neither uncommon nor strange. The present version is made up from various readings and recitations. It is difficult to say how much is of England or of Scotland; or how much is new, or how much is old. The English song first appeared in 1611, and it was old then.

TAK YOUR AULD CLOAK ABOUT YOU.

In winter when the rain rain'd cauld,
And frost and snaw on ilka hill,
And Boreas, with his blasts sae bauld,
Was threat'ning a' our kye to kill:
Then Bell, my wife, wha loves na strife,
She said to me right hastilie,
Get up, goodman, save Cromie's life,
And tak your auld cloak about ye.

My Cromie is an useful cow,
And she is come of a good kin';
Aft has she wet the bairns' mou,
And I am laith that she shou'd tyne;
Get up, goodman, it is fou time,
The sun shines in the lift sae hie;
Sloth never made a gracious end,
Go tak your auld cloak about ye.

My cloak was anes a good grey cloak,
When it was fitting for my wear;
But now it's scantly worth a groat,
For I have worn't this thirty year:
Let's spend the gear that we have won,
We little ken the day we'll die:
Then I'll be proud, for I have sworn
To have a new cloak about me.

In days when good king Robert rang,
His trews they cost but half-a-crown;
He said they were a groat o'er dear,
And call'd the tailor thief and loun.
He was the king that wore a crown,
And thou'rt a man of low degree;
'Tis pride puts a' the country down,
Sae tak thy auld cloak about thee.

Every land has its ain law,
Ilk kind of corn it has its hool;
I think the warld is a' run wrang,
When ilka wife her man wad rule.
Do ye not see Rob, Jock, and Hab,
As they are girded gallantlie,
While I sit hurklen in the ase?
I'll have a new cloak about me.

Goodman, I wat 'tis thirty years
Since we did ane anither ken;
And we have had between us twa,
Of lads and bonny lasses ten:
Now they are women grown and men,
I wish and pray well may they be;
And if you prove a good husband,
E'en tak your auld cloak about ye.

Bell, my wife, she loves na strife,
But she wad guide me, if she can,

And to maintain an easy life,
I aft maun yield, though I'm goodman:
Nought's to be won at woman's hand,
Unless ye give her a' the plea;
Then I'll leave aff where I began,
And tak my auld cloak about me.

England has preferred a claim to this truly excellent and ancient song; and I ought not to attempt to take lightly from her what Shakspeare has quoted and Percy illustrated. But though I should seek as anxiously to retain it to my country as I would do to reclaim the Black Stone of Scone, on which our kings were and are crowned; yet candour obliges me to acknowledge, that the Scottish origin of the song has at least been rendered doubtful, in the discovery, by Percy, of an additional and characteristic, though ruder verse than its fellows, which comes in between the first and second stanzas. I must say, this seems to complete the dramatic purpose of the song, which allows to each speaker a verse, and follows very naturally the admonition of the woman. Her mildness, however, which the first verse in the English version sings of, is sorely rebuked by the charge of flyting and scorning which comes from the man in the second.

O Bell, why dost thou flyte and scorne?
Thou kenst my cloak is very thin;
It is so bare and overworne,
A creike, he thereon cannot renne:

Then I'll no longer borrow nor lend,
For once I'll new apparelled be;
To-morrow I'll to town and spend—
For I'll have a new cloak about me.

But to whatever country pertains the right of the original production, there can be but one opinion of the excellence of the two versions.

Cow Crumbocke is a very good cow,
She has been always true to the payle,
She has helpt us to butter and cheese, I trow,
And other things she will not fail:
I would be loth to see her pine—
Good husband, counsell take of me,
It is not for us to go so fine,
Man, take thine old cloak about thee.

Only compare this verse from Percy with the corresponding stanza in our northern version, which Allan Ramsay had the good fortune to find and preserve.

GOOD ALE HAUDS MY HEART ABOON.

O gude ale comes and gude ale goes,
Gude ale gars me sell my hose,
Sell my hose and pawn my shoon,
Gude ale hauds my heart aboon:
Gude ale keeps me bare and busy,
Brandy makes me dull and dizzy,
Gars me sleep and sough i' my shoon,
Gude ale hauds my heart aboon.

O in the sweetest plums there's stones,
And in the fairest beef there's bones;
Rum turns ye rude, wine makes ye pale,
There's life and love and soul in ale:
Gude ale's the medicine oft spaed of,
The very stuff that life is made of,
Dropt in a receipt from the moon,
To haud men's sinking hearts aboon.

May he rub shoulders wi' the gallows,
Who wad keep gude ale frae gude fallows;
May he gape wide when suns are south,
And never drink come near his drouth;
But here's to him, where'er he roam,
Who loves to see the flagons foam,
For he's a king o'er lord and loon—
Gude ale hauds my heart aboon.

Much of this hearty song is old, and it cannot be denied that some of it is new. I have heard many varieties of it, and collected many verses in which there is much more sensuality than sentiment, and more love shown for good ale than good wit. I could make a curious note out of these fragments of drunkards' ditties; but I choose rather to give a specimen of the affection which the good people of England manifested in the time of Henry the Sixth for this ancient beverage. There is but one specimen preserved of those wassail songs, which the author of Piers Plowman reprehends the priests for chanting over their ale—it cannot be expected to be either very delicate or elegant: Dr. Johnson has somewhere observed of it, that the merriment is very gross and the sentiments very worthless.

Bring us home good ale, sir, bring us home good ale,
O, for our dear Lady's love, bring us home good ale.

Bring us home no beef, sir, for beef is full of bones,
Bring home good ale enough, I love it when it foams.

Bring us home no wheaten bread, for it is full of chaff,
Bring us home no rye bread, for it is brown with draff.

Bring us home no pork, sir, for it is all too fat,
Neither bring barley bread, for little love I that.

Bring us home no mutton, sir, for it is tough and lean,
Neither bring us trypes, sir, for they be seldom clean.

Bring us home no veal, sir, for who can it desire,
But bring us home good ale, sir, to drink all by the fire.

Bring us home no cyder, and bring us home no wine,
But bring us home good ale, else ye'll have curses nine.

There are later and much more polished songs, but I know of none that gives good ale such a hearty welcome as this. It is modernized a little from a copy in the Harleian manuscripts.

FAIR ANNIE OF LOCHROYAN.

Sweet Annie built a bonnie ship,
And set her on the sea;
The sails were a' of the damask'd silk,
The masts of silver free.
The gladsome waters sung below,
And the sweet wind sung above—
Make way for Annie of Lochroyan,
She comes to seek her love.

A gentle wind came with a sweep,
And stretched her silken sail,
When up there came a reaver rude,
With many a shout and hail:

O touch her not, my mariners a',
  Such loveliness goes free;
Make way for Annie of Lochroyan,
  She seeks Lord Gregorie.

The moon looked out with all her stars,
  The ship moved merrily on,
Until she came to a castle high,
  That all as diamonds shone:
On every tower there streamed a light,
  On the middle tower shone three—
Move for that tower my mariners a',
  My love keeps watch for me.

She took her young son in her arms,
  And on the deck she stood—
The wind rose with an angry gust,
  The sea wave wakened rude.
Oh open the door, Lord Gregory, love,
  Oh open and let me in;
The sea foam hangs in my yellow hair,
  The surge dreeps down my chin.

All for thy sake, Lord Gregory, love,
  I've sailed a perilous way,
And thy fair son is 'tween my breasts,
  And he'll be dead ere day.
The foam hangs on the topmost cliff,
  The fires run on the sky,

And hear ye not your true love's voice,
And her sweet baby's cry?

Fair Annie turned her round about,
And tears began to flow—
May never a baby suck a breast
Wi' a heart sae fou of woe.
Take down, take down that silver mast,
Set up a mast of tree,
It does nae become a forsaken dame
To sail sae royallie.

Oh read my dream, my mother dear—
I heard a sweet babe greet,
And saw fair Annie of Lochroyan
Lie cauld dead at my feet.
And loud and loud his mother laughed—
Oh sight's mair sure than sleep,
I saw fair Annie, and heard her voice,
And her baby wail and weep.

O he went down to yon sea side
As fast as he could fare,
He saw fair Annie and her sweet babe,
But the wild wind tossed them sair:
And hey Annie, and how Annie,
And Annie winna ye bide?
But aye the mair he called Annie,
The broader grew the tide.

And hey Annie, and how Annie,
Dear Annie speak to me,
But aye the louder he cried Annie,
The louder roared the sea.
The wind waxed loud, the sea grew rough,
The ship sunk nigh the shore,
Fair Annie floated through the foam,
But the baby rose no more.

Oh first he kissed her cherry cheek,
And then he kissed her chin,
And syne he kissed her rosie lips,
But there was nae breath within.
Oh my love's love was true as light,
As meek and sweet was she—
My mother's hate was strong as death,
And fiercer than the sea.

The pathetic story of the Lass of Lochroyan has been celebrated by Burns, and likewise by Dr. Wolcot; but I am far from certain that either in natural pathos or simple beauty they equal the ancient ballad. Wolcot had the start of the Scottish poet, and imagined he had written something very moving and very original, and expressed some surprise that any one should attempt to share with him the merit of composing a song on a subject he had elected as his own. I see no cause for his anger: he found his subject where Burns found his—a subject on which any poet may meditate without imagining he is interfering with the fast

decreasing fame of Wolcot, or the increasing fame of Burns.

In compressing this very long and very beautiful ballad into the compass of ten verses, I am sensible that I have omitted many attractive lines, and many wild embellishments, which all served to heighten the effect and deepen the catastrophe. I have made free with the very perfect edition of Sir Walter Scott: I wish so well to all mutilated ballads as to wish them to come through his hand; his versions are more captivating than those of any other person, and on many occasions he seems to evoke the spirits of the old minstrels to fill up the breaches time had made in their strains. Lord Gregory is represented under the influence of fairy charms or witchcraft: I have heard a verse that made him confer the name of witch on his mother, and charge the deep sleep into which he was cast to her malice and her incantations.

Lochroyan, which gives the name to the ballad, lies on the coast of Galloway, and the castle of Lord Gregory is supposed to have stood on a rock in the neighbouring sea, and some ruins of ancient edifices seem to countenance this conjecture. Burns says, "It is somewhat singular that in Lanark, Renfrew, Ayr, Wigton, Kirkcudbright and Dumfries shires, there is scarcely an old song or tune which, from the title, &c., can be guessed to belong to, or be the production of, these counties. This, I conjecture, is one of those very few, as the ballad, which is a long one, is called both by tradition and in printed collections, 'The Lass of Lochroyan.'" Let

other counties reply to the hasty reproach of the poet—I shall speak for my own—we have many ballads and songs which, from story, or name, or circumstance, claim and have an origin in Dumfriesshire.

THE WEE WEE MAN.

As I was walking all alone,
  Atween a water and a wa',
O there I met a wee wee man,
  And he was the least I ever saw:
His legs were scarce a shathmont lang,
  And thick and thimber was his thie;
Atween his brows there was a span,
  And atween his shoulders there was three.

He took up a mickle stane,
  And flang't as far as I could see;
Though I had been a giant born
  I could na lift it to my knee.
O wee wee man, ye're wonder strong,
  O tell me where thy dwelling be?
My dwelling's down in a bonnie bower,
  O ladie, gang wi' me and see.

On we lap, and awa we flew,
Till we came to a valley green;
We lighted down and he stamped his foot,
And up there rose a lady fine
Wi' four-and-twenty at her back,
And a' clad out in the glossy green—
Though the king of Scotland had been there,
The worst o' them might hae been his queen.

And on we lap, and awa we rode,
Till we came to a stately ha',
The roof was all of the beaten gowd,
And the floor was o' the chrystal a':
And there were harpings loud and sweet,
And ladies dancing jimp and sma'—
He clapped his hands, and ere I wist,
He sank and saunted clean awa.

This portion of old Scottish lyrical romance was recovered by David Herd, and published with some imperfections in 1776. I have sought to improve the present version by the admission of several variations from recitation and singing. The "Wee wee man" seems a more tractable sort of brownie or goblin, and to be something akin to the fairies with whom old belief tenanted so many green hills and lonely valleys. He was endowed with supernatural powers, and his form was strangely distorted and disproportioned. The shathmont's length, which his leg scarcely measured, means the hand closed

and the thumb extended—an old Scottish measurement; and his brows with a span between, joined the head of a giant to the limbs of a dwarf. An ancient English version of the romance is printed in Finlay's ballads.

I'D RATHER BE FAST THAN FREE.

I'd rather be fast than free,
  I'd rather be still than move;
My love has a man of me,
  Who loathes all things but love:
O what can one desire,
  But love that's frank and free?
If love were a burning fire,
  I'd rather be burnt than flee.

Without love would be strife,
  Nor kindness could endure;
Without love what is life?—
  A pain that nought can cure;
But love, where is delight,
  A dool than none dow dree;
But love, how could I write
  My sangs sae sweet and free?

Love scatters the miser's gear,
  Love makes a martial mind;
Fause fortune, who can fear,
  When love comes laughing kind?
Love makes a coward brave,
  And bids the bound be free;
Love makes a gowk a man—
  And love's the thing for me.

Love comes but from above,
  Its warmth is too divine
To come from a meaner place
  Than where the pure stars shine.
He that would honour win,
  Or hope to sing like me,
Maun loup o'er the lugs in love,
  And rather be fast than free.

I found in Montgomery's poems a song in a curious and unpopular measure, out of which I made this—preserving as much as I could the words and sentiments of the old. It is freer from conceits and idle learning than most of his productions, and merits the attempt which I have now, I fear unsuccessfully, made, to introduce it in a form less strange and exceptionable. Those who wish to see the original production will accept of the following specimen:

I rather far be fast nor free,
  Albeit I might my mynd remove;

My maistres has a man of me,
That lothis of every thing but love.
Quhat can a man desyre?
Quhat can a man requyre?
But tyme sall caus him tyre,
And let it be;
Except that fervent fyre
Of burning love impyre,
Hope heghts me sik a hyre—
I rather far be fast nor free.

I'D RATHER BE FREE THAN FAST.

I'd rather be free than fast—
'Tis sweet to change ane's mind;
Love's light can never last,
It comes of a fleeting kind:
I love not much to moan,
Nor sigh nor look aghast;
I hope my heart is stone—
I'd rather be free than fast.

But freedom, what is life?
The night, without the moon:
But freedom, what is love?
A light that's saunted soon.

A kiss is but a touch,
Too pleasant far to last—
Oh! lasting joys for me;
I'd rather be free than fast.

O freedom found me bound,
And loosed the iron bands;
And freedom broke a chain
That was bound by whiter hands:
Love tied me hand and foot,
Wi' monie a kittle cast;
And was my keeper lang—
I'd rather be free than fast.

O love's a wilfu witch,
That makes a man a beast;
O love's a will-o-wisp
That misleads ye to the priest,
And cheats ye like a fool;
And wi' an uncannie cast
Ties you to petticoat rule—
I'd rather be free than fast.

Montgomery has fewer of the symptoms of oblivion about his verses than most of our minor poets; and had he written more in the common ballad metre of his country he might have shared in the popularity of our national lyrics. But his measures are strange; he seems to have imagined that poetry owed some of its attractions to its external appearance, and that the fur-

ther he forsook the ordinary form of verse the nearer he approached to poetry. I made this version out of the same singular metre as the preceding, and took corresponding liberties with the original; the following is a specimen:

I'd rather far be free nor fast,
I hope I may remove my mynd;
Love is so licht it cannot last,
It is small plesor to be pynd:
Sen I haiff e'es two
What need I blindlings go,
Ay flundering to and fro—
Quhile clods me cast?
I am not one of tho',
To work my wilfull wo—
I shaip not to do so:
I rather far be free nor fast.

YOUNG ERLINTON.

O who is that at my bower door,
Beneath the midnight moon?
O come to thy true love, Erlinton,
Among the blooming broom.

The maiden lay in her bed of silk,
And heard the cock thrice crow,
When she said to her sisters twain,
Arise, for day doth daw.

As she put on her damask gown,
Her heart was leaping fain,
She took a sister in ilka hand,
And to the broom she's gane:
She had nae walked among the broom
Mair steps than twa or three,
When up rose Erlinton, her love,
O the fairest gangs wi' me.

They leaped upon a gude gray steed,
Fleet as the morning wind—
Alas, for thee, mine own true love,
There's armed men behind.
And foremost came an eldern knight,
In the sun his gray hairs shone—
Now wherefore rides so fair a dame
With the outlaw Erlinton?

And up and spake a second knight,
And out his sword drew he—
I wish the world were three steps wide,
And none but thee and me.
And out and spake he, Erlinton:
Ere I had struck strokes three,

Ye would wish the three steps thirty miles,
And twenty men wi' thee.

He leaped on the ground, young Erlinton,
Saying, Lady, hold my steed,
And see ye dinna change your cheer
Till ye see my body bleed.
He set his back against an oak,
His foot against a stone,
And he has fought these fifteen knights,
And slain them all but one.

To draw my sword on his gray hair
Would be a sin and shame;
So let him go, the eldern knight,
And carry the tidings hame.
He clasped in his arms his lady fair,
And kissed her tenderlie—
I've won thee now with word and sword,
And we walk the greenwood free.

A ruder variation of this fine old lyric is preserved under the same name in the Border Minstrelsy.—Though it has many circumstances and images in common with other ballads, we feel, in the perusal, all the pleasure of an original conception. To steal a lady—to mount her on a fleet steed—to be pursued—to be victorious over a multitude, and win her from them, are all incidents which have found their way into many songs; and yet they charm us here because they are

associated with new feelings. The threats of the old knight and the vaunts of the young, with the courtesy of Erlinton, animate the commoner materials of the story; and his modesty after his victory, and his wish to walk the greenwood free, leave an impression upon us which few old lyrics leave.

To Bishop Percy we owe a copy of this legendary tale, embellished in all the lavish richness of Gothic beauty—the Childe of Elle. Read the tale of Sir Cauline and the Childe of Elle, and compare their antique profusion of beauty and simple elegance with the Hermit of Warkworth, or any other ballad where Percy writes in his own name, and without any impulse from half recollected fragments and some dimly seen story. He has the fear of the world and of Dr. Johnson and Goldsmith upon him; and is cold, and correct, and trembling. When he comes in the apparel of the old minstrel, he is free and fearless, and sings nothing but the most exquisite and enduring strains.

Percy is distinguished among all our ballad poets by a simple ease and happiness of expression—by a half-studied and half-lucky use of old phrases, and old imagery, and old manners, and old customs, and old events. When he borrows, and he borrows often, he always adds a grace of his own. In the romance of Florice and Blancheflour, when the Soldan or Amiral was about to slay the lovers,

> Weeping, he turned his head away,
> And his sword it fell to ground.

In like manner the Baron in the Childe of Elle relents on beholding his daughter and the devotion of her lover; but see the natural image which the Bishop has added:

The Baron stroked his dark brown cheek
And turned his face aside,
To wipe away the starting tear
He proudly strove to hide.

Compare this with an interpolated verse in Childe Morrice:

His hair was like the threads of gold
Drawn from Minerva's loom,
His lips like roses dropping dew,
His breath was a' perfume.

This is beautiful, indeed, of its kind, but of classic instead of Gothic extraction: it stands like a stone in a stream, or an Ionic capital among wild, deep, sharp, Saxon tracery.

JOHNIE OF BREADISLEE.

Johnie rose up in a May morning,
Called for water to wash his hands:—
Gar loose to me, my gude gray dogs,
That are bound wi' iron bands.
And wi' his shafts and his gude bow,
His blade baith brent and brown,
Johnie's away to Durisdeer
To pull the dun deer down.

And he has pulled down a stately buck,
And wi' the liver and lungs
He has feasted his gray and bludie dogs
As they had been earl's sons.
They eat sae much of the venison,
And lappit sae much o' the blood,
That Johnie and all his bludie hounds
Fell asleep by the wild wood.

And by there came a silly auld man
Wha dwelt by Hazelly-brae;
And he's away to the foresters seven
As fast as he could gae.
O up and away, ye foresters bold,
For 'mang the Merriemass scroggs—
The bonniest Childe that ever I saw
Lies sleeping 'mang his dogs.

The shirt that is upon his back
Is of the holland fine;
The doublet which is over that
Is of the Lincoln twine;
The buttons upon his grass-green sleeve
Are of the gowd sae gude;
And the gray dogs he lies amang,
Their mouths are wet wi' blude.

Then out and spoke the head forester—
Now bend your gude bows a',
If this be Johnie of Breadislee,
Nae nearer will we draw.
The first shafts that the foresters shot
They wounded him on the knee;
Now pluck your shafts for another flight—
We soon shall gar him die.

Johnie set his back against an oak,
His foot against a stone;
And he has slain these seven foresters—
He has slain them all but one.
He has broken three ribs in that ane's side,
But and his collar bane;
And laid him twa-fauld over his steed—
Now carry the tidings hame.

O, is there never a bonnie bird
Can tell a tale for me?

And away and away flew that bonnie bird
To the bowers of Breadislee:
And it flew near his mother's hand,
And loud and loud it sang—
O, 'mang the deer of Durisdeer,
Fair Johnie tarries lang.

They made a litter of mountain ash,
And of the hazel brown;
But through the green and the leafy boughs
His life's blood trickled down.
And out and spake his auld mother,
And fast her tears can fa'—
Ye wadnae be warned, my son Johnie,
Frae the hunting to bide awa.

O lay my brown sword by my side,
And my bent bow at my feet;
And stay the howling o' my gray dogs
That sound may be my sleep.
His dogs are dead, his bent bow broke,
And his shafts that flew sae free;
And he lies dead near Durisdeer—
Fair Johnie of Breadislee.

"The hero of this ballad," says Sir Walter Scott, "appears to have been an outlaw, or deer stealer; probably one of the broken men residing upon the border. There are several different copies; in one of which the

principal personage is called Johnie of Cockielaw;—the stanzas of greatest merit have been selected from each copy." The lament of his mother, and the unusual splendour of Johnie's dress, would lead me to conclude that he was an opulent person and an only son; and when we remember the long and cruel wars waged between the Maxwells and the Johnstones, we need hardly resort to the expedient of outlawry to put him in peril. We have only to suppose that a Maxwell went to hunt in the lands of a Johnstone, or a Johnstone in the lands of a Maxwell, and we have a story of peril and bloodshed.

Johnie's residence has sometimes been given to the old castle of Morton: there are still vestiges of towers on the hills between Closeburn and Durisdeer; and there are plenty of wild and almost inaccessible caverns and linns, where a desperate man might find refuge. The tradition of the hero of Breadislee is countenanced by a description, given in an account of the presbytery of Penpont, of a deer-park, made by Randolph, Earl of Murray, on the face of a steep hill near Morton-castle, and so curiously contrived, that all wild beasts, such as deer, harts, roes, and hares, could easily leap in, but could not leap out again; and it was doubted if their owners were permitted to get them out again—a noble park for an outlaw! Breadislee, near Lochmaben, has been pointed out as the more probable residence of the hero of the song; and the scenery in the neighbourhood, and the tradition of the country, countenance the supposition.

I LOVED THEE ONCE.

I lov'd thee once, I'll love no more,
Thine be the grief, as is the blame;
Thou art not what thou wast before,
What reason I should be the same?
He that can love, unlov'd again,
Hath better store of love than brain.
God send me love my debts to pay,
While unthrifts fool their love away.

Nothing could have my love o'erthrown
If thou hadst still continued mine;
Yea, if thou hadst still remain'd thy own,
I might, perchance, have yet been thine;
But thou thy freedom didst recal,
That it thou might'st elsewhere enthral,
And then, how could I but disdain
A captive's captive to remain?

When new desires had conquer'd thee,
And chang'd the object of thy will,
It had been lethargy in me,
No constancy, to love thee still:
Yea, it had been a sin to go
And prostitute affection so;
Since we are taught no prayers to say
To such as must to others pray.

Yet do thou glory in thy choice;
  Thy choice, of his good fortune boast;
I'll neither grieve nor yet rejoice,
  To see him gain what I have lost:
The height of my disdain shall be,
To laugh at him, to blush for thee;
  To love thee still, but go no more
  A begging at a beggar's door.

The inconstancy of woman's love is a favourite theme with our lyric poets; and if we may believe their strains, no men have suffered so largely from her waywardness and mutability. Montgomery and Scott are foremost in these lamentations, and they have been echoed by many succeeding poets. These verses by Sir Robert Ayton will remind the reader of some of our earlier poetry—there is elegance in his fancy, and melody in his versification. He is buried in Westminster abbey; his inscription is in Latin, and his bust in bronze: in his looks there is as much of the gentleman as the genius. His monument is near that of Henry the Fifth. The brass head of the humble poet is still safe and unmutilated; while the silver head of the hero of Agincourt fell a victim to the value of its material: it was melted down by the rapacious parliament of Oliver Cromwell, to assist in paying the army—and may be doing the same yet. There is a moral to man in this, and a lesson to sculptors.

I DO CONFESS THOU'RT SMOOTH AND FAIR.

I do confess thou'rt smooth and fair,
And I might have gone near to love thee;
Had I not found the slightest prayer
That lips could speak, had power to move thee:
But I can let thee now alone
As worthy to be lov'd by none.

I do confess thou'rt sweet, yet find
Thee such an unthrift of thy sweets,
Thy favours are but like the wind
That kisseth every thing it meets.
And since thou canst with more than one,
Thou'rt worthy to be kiss'd by none.

The morning rose, that untouch'd stands,
Arm'd with her briers, how sweetly smells!
But pluck'd and strain'd through ruder hands,
Her sweet no longer with her dwells;
But scent and beauty both are gone,
And leaves fall from her, one by one.

Such fate, ere long, will thee betide,
When thou hast handled been awhile!
Like sere flowers to be thrown aside,
And I shall sigh, while some will smile,

To see thy love for more than one
Hath brought thee to be lov'd by none.

Burns altered the measure of this song, inoculated it with some Scottish words, and imagined he had improved its simplicity. He never made any attempt so very unsuccessfully: I add his version—

I do confess thou art so fair,
I wad been o'er the lugs in love,
Had I na found the slightest prayer
That lips could speak thy heart could move.
I do confess thee sweet—but find
Thou art sae thriftless of thy sweets—
Thy favours are the silly wind,
That kisses ilka thing it meets.

See yonder rosebud rich in dew,
Among its native briers sae coy;
How sune it tines its scent and hue
When pu'd and worn a common toy.
Sic fate, ere long, shall thee betide,
Tho' thou may gaily bloom awhile;
Yet sune thou shalt be thrown aside
Like any common weed and vile.

This is one of the songs of Sir Robert Aÿton—it is very popular and very beautiful.

LORD MAXWELL'S GOODNIGHT.

Adieu, Madame, my mother dear,
But and my sisters three!
Adieu, fair Robert of Orchardstane!
My heart is wae for thee.
Adieu, the lily and the rose,
The primrose fair to see;
Adieu, my ladye and only joy!
For I may not stay with thee.

Though I have slain the Lord Johnstone,
What care I for their feid?
My noble mind their wrath disdains;
He was my father's deid.
Both night and day I labour'd oft
Of him avenged to be;
But now I've got what lang I sought,
And I may not stay with thee.

Adieu! Drumlanrig false wert aye,
And Closeburn in a band!
The laird of Lag, frae my father that fled,
When Johnstone struck off his hand.
They were three brethren in a band—
Joy may they never see!
Their treacherous art, and cowardly heart,
Has twin'd my love frae me.

Adieu, Dumfries, my proper place,
But and Caerlaverock fair;
Adieu, my castle of the Thrieve,
Wi' a' my buildings there;
Adieu, Lochmaben's gates sae fair,
And Langholm-holm, where birks there be;
Adieu, my ladye and only joy!
For, trust me, I may not stay with thee.

Adieu, fair Eskdale, up and down,
Where my poor friends do dwell,
The bangisters will ding them down,
And will them sair compel;
But I'll avenge their feid mysel,
When I come o'er the sea:
Adieu, my ladye and only joy!
For I may not stay with thee.

Lord of the land, that ladye said,
O wad ye gang wi' me
Unto my brother's stately tower,
Where safest ye may be!
There Hamiltons and Douglas baith
Shall rise to succour thee.
Thanks for thy kindness, fair my dame,
But I may not stay with thee.

Then took he off a gay gold ring,
Thereat hung signets three;

Hae, take thee that, my ain dear thing,
And still have mind of me;—
But if thou take another lord
Ere I come owre the sea,
His life is but a three days' lease,
Though I may not stay wi' thee.

The wind was fair, the ship was clear,
That good lord went away;
And most of all his friends were there,
To give him a fair convey.
They drank the wine—they didnae spare
Even in that good lord's sight;
Sae now he is o'er the flood sae gray—
Lord Maxwell has taen his Goodnight.

This beautiful song was copied by Sir Walter Scott, and imitated by Lord Byron—honours enough for the work of any minstrel. It was found in the Glenriddell manuscript, and is printed with some slight traditional variations.

It alludes to the close of one of the most remarkable and obstinate feuds of all the western marches—the long and inveterate war between the houses of Maxwell and Johnstone. After many mutual inroads and desperate encounters, in which success generally was on the side of the Maxwells, two thousand of the warriors of Nithsdale and Galloway entered Annandale, and advanced towards the water of Dryfe. They were led by Lord

Maxwell in person; and the various tribes were commanded by the Kirkpatricks, the Hallidays, the Griersons and Douglases, and other names noted in Nithsdale. To the aid of the Johnstones came the Scotts, the Elliots, the Armstrongs, and Graemes—the fiercest and bravest of all the border tribes. These auxiliaries were allied by blood and mutual interest to Lord Johnstone, and were led by some of the bravest and most renowned warriors of the name of Scott: the ancestor of Sir Walter Scott of Abbotsford was among them. They posted themselves in a thick wood near Lockerby, and awaited the advance of their enemies.

The Maxwells, covered by a thick mist, which concealed alike their enemies and them, prepared to pass the Dryfe. Tradition says that the Johnstones were unwilling to fight against an army superior to their own; that the Elliots, conducted by a considerate and cautious veteran, wished to abide in ambush; while the Scotts alone called out for open war, and proposed to dispute the passage of the river, the eastern bank of which was steep and difficult, and the bridge long and narrow. It was more with the wish of reconnoitring than with the desire of coming to a battle, that the Johnstones began to pass the stream. The Scotts and the other auxiliaries were foremost, and meeting with the vanguard of the Maxwells in the mist, a sharp encounter took place: the borderers charged first, and to their fierce and steady valour the fortune of the day may be ascribed. Lord Maxwell was struck from his horse, near where a thorn tree is now growing, and inhumanly slain,

after the right hand, which he stretched out for quarter, had been hewn from his body.

John, the young Lord Maxwell, was in the battle, and retreated into Nithsdale, vowing the deepest revenge against Lord Johnstone for the cruel death of his father. He remembered that when his bastard uncle Robert, the bravest and most fortunate warrior of the house of Maxwell, had defeated Lord Johnstone, burnt his castle of Lochwood, and taken his lordship prisoner, the victory had not been abused by cruelty, nor the vanquished murdered, when they called for quarter. His vow of revenge was deep, and amply and dishonourably was it fulfilled. Neither the threats nor entreaties of the king himself, nor a rigorous imprisonment in Edinburgh Castle, could change his purpose. He escaped from confinement, returned to Dumfriesshire, and through the means of Maxwell of Orchardstone, who had married Lord Johnstone's sister, obtained a conference with that chieftain at Auchnamhill, on the 6th of April, 1608, and slew him basely. He escaped to France, and as he set his foot on shipboard, the old minstrel supposes that he uttered his memorable Goodnight.

Sir Walter Scott concludes that the Goodnight was written before the execution of Lord Maxwell in 1613. From the disasters of this unhappy feud the house of Maxwell, which had risen into great power and eminence, never fairly recovered. They had numbered many of the most famous names of Dumfriesshire and Galloway among their liegemen and vassals.

HUGHIE GRAEME.

Our lords are to the mountains gane,
And all to hunt the fallow deer,
And they have taen him, Hughie Graeme,
For stealing of the bishop's mare;
And they have bound him hand and foot,
And led him up through Carlisle town,
And lords and knaves came out and cried,
O, Hughie Graeme, thou art a loon!

O loose my right hand free, he said,
And put my good sword in the same,
He's no in Carlisle town this day,
Dare tell the tale to Hughie Graeme.
O up then spake he brave Corehead,
As he sat by the bishop's knee,
Full fifty gallant steeds I'll give,
To let stout Hugh the Graeme gae free.

O haud your tongue, the bishop said,
And wi' your pleading let me be;
If fifty Graemes were in his coat,
This is the day that he maun die.
They took him to the gallows-knowe;
He looked on the gallows tree,

Yet never colour left his cheek,
Nor ever did he blink his ee.

And then he looked round about,
And a' to see what he might see;
O there he saw his auld father,
And he was weeping bitterlie.
O haud your tongue, my father dear,
And wi' your weeping let me be;
Your weeping's sairer to my heart
Than a' that they can do to me.

O gie to my young brother John
My sword bent in the middle clear,
And let him come at twelve o'clock,
And see me pay the bishop's mare.
And ye may give my brother James
My sword bent in the middle brown,
And bid him come at four o'clock,
And see his brother Hugh cut down.

And fare ye weel, fair Meg, my wife,
Wha bare me bairns, and by me lay,
Ye made and warm'd the bishop's bed,
And kissed your husband's life away.
And ye may tell the gallant Graemes,
A drop is spilt of their best blood;
And when they meet the bishop's cloak,
To make it shorter by the hood.

I have retained this copy of the song because several verses have felt the inspiring touch of Burns. He copied it from recitation, improved its pathos, and sent it to Johnson's Musical Museum with the assurance that it was from oral tradition in Ayrshire, where, when he was a boy, it was a popular song. It has been said that Hugh the Graeme made an excursion into Cumberland and carried off the bishop of Carlisle's mare, because the prelate had seduced his wife. Tradition, in all the varieties of her legends, never invented such an unnecessary and superfluous reason as this. By habit and by nature thieves, the Graemes never waited for any thing like a pretence to steal—they went and took what they wanted on both sides of the border:

> They found the beeves that made their broth,
> In Scotland and in England both.

The tradition is however countenanced in a much grosser verse than the one which I have ventured to retain. "Of the morality of Robert Aldridge, bishop of Carlisle," says Sir Walter Scott, "we know but little; but his political and religious faith were of a stretching and accommodating texture." "He saw many changes in church and state," says Anthony a Wood; "but he retained his offices and preferments during them all."

TODLEN HAME.

When I've a saxpence under my thumb,
Then I'll get credit in ilka town:
But ay when I'm poor they bid me gang by;
O! poverty parts good company.
Todlen hame, todlen hame,
Coudna my love come todlen hame?

Fair fa' the goodwife, and send her good sale,
She gi'es us white bannocks to drink her ale,
Syne if that her tippeny chance to be sma',
We'll tak a good scour o't, and ca't awa'.
Todlen hame, todlen hame,
As round as a neep come todlen hame.

My kimmer and I lay down to sleep,
Wi' twa pint-stoups at our bed's feet;
And ay when we waken'd, we drank them dry:
What think ye of my wee kimmer and I?
Todlen but, and todlen ben,
Sae round as my love comes todlen hame.

Leeze me on liquor, my todlen dow
Ye're ay sae good-humour'd when weeting your mou;
When sober ye're sour, and would fight wi' a flie,
That 'tis a blyth sight to the bairns and me,
When todlen hame, todlen hame,
When round as a neep ye come todlen hame.

Burns says this is perhaps the best bottle song ever composed; and both as a poet and a companion he was a competent judge. I know, indeed, nothing better in the whole compass of verse dedicated to express delight in mirth and drinking than the characteristic exclamation of the wife in the concluding stanza. I am of opinion, however, that it has been made out of the fragments of two songs, for the last verse corresponds not in the narrative part with its companions, and I have heard several verses sung in continuation which brought the song to a very amusing end. The words were recovered by Allan Ramsay; they have been popular ever since, and were so long before, for they seem very old. We have many curious fragments of convivial songs, some of which are excellent:

Drunk yesternight,
And drunk the night before;
If I dinna be drunk to-night,
Let me never be sober more.

I know not that the love of good fellowship has subsided among us, but we have few poets now who celebrate wine and wassail. I once heard a gentleman declare that no good joyous songs had been written since the Reformation. Like the tory fox-hunter in the British Freeholder, who swore that England had not enjoyed good weather since the Revolution.

THE WIFE OF USHER'S-WELL.

There dwalt a wife at Usher's-well,
A wealthy wife was she,
She had three stout and stalwart sons,
And sent them o'er the sea.
The wind blew east, the wind blew west,
The sea was in a faem,
And sair the wife began to weep,
I wish my bairns were hame.

The wind blew north, the wind blew south,
And a cry came from the sea;
And word came to the weeping wife,
That her sons she'd never see.
I wish the wind may nae mair blow,
Nor fishes swim the flood,
Till my three bairns come hame to me,
In earthly flesh and blood.

It fell in about the Martinmas,
When nights are lang and mirk,
That her three sons came hame to her,
And their hats were o' the birk.
It neither grew on holm nor hill,
Nor by the fallow lea—
By the bless'd gate of Paradise
The birk grows fair and free.

Blaw up the fire, my maidens a',
We'll dine and dance belyve,
For my ain sons are hale and weel,
How can I be but blythe?
Blaw up the fire, my maidens a',
Spare neither ale nor wine:
Is there a wife in Scotland wide,
Wi' heart sae light as mine?

And merrily danced the maidens a'
Aneath the torches glowing.
Why smile ye not, my ain sweet bairns?
Ye see the red wine flowing.
And she has made to them a bed,
And spread it lang and wide,
And folded her mantle 'bout her waist,
And sat down by their side.

She sat till first the red cock crew,
And syne up crew the grey:
The young son to the auldest said,
Its time we were away.
The grey cock hadnae crown but once,
Nor clapp'd his wings at a',
When the auld son to the youngest said,
Brother, we maun awa.

The cock doth craw, the day doth daw',
The channering worm doth chide;
Gin we be mist out of our place,
A sair pain maun we bide:

Sae fare ye weel, my mither dear,
Farewell to my sister Jean;
And fare ye weel, my bonny lass,
That danced wi' the dead yestreen.

Of the dead returning to dine and dance with the living, I know not that we have any better testimony than what the Wife of Usher's-well affords. It is true that I could relate, on authority equally credible, some remarkable attempts of the dead to hold intercourse with the living; I shall however confine myself to the singular story of a Scottish clergyman who had several conferences with the ghost of a wicked laird of Galloway. To those who never had the good fortune to meet with this wild story in print, it will be enough to say, that the ghost of the laird was never seen till after sunset, always spoke as if it acted under the control of a superior spirit, and never appeared save on horseback. It came to earth to disclose some acts of wickedness which it desired the priest to redress, and to discuss some knotty points of the doctrine of doom and salvation. It was a merry and rather a saucy spirit; and on one occasion, when the divine took his staff to chastise it, he found but a form of air. It will be painful to those who depend on an equality in the place of punishment to know, that the spirit of the laird rode on the ghost of one of his tenants, made into a steed for his especial accommodation and amusement. The person who wrote this extraordinary story had an imagination exactly suited for its reception: he believed in his imaginary interviews with the spirit, and expanded them into the dimensions of a moderate

romance. He confided his manuscript to the examination of a lady whose belief and experience rendered her a judge of the language and character of spirits; and posterity will regret that a descendant of the person whose ghost figured as the hero of the tale contrived to abstract (steal's the word) the labour of the divine, and neither ghost nor tale have ever been seen since.

To return to the song. It is supposed that the wife of Usher's-well had, by some words which tradition has obscured or omitted, charmed back her children to earth; and that they came from the place of the blessed is inferred from their hats of birk. The souls of the blessed are crowned with garlands. I believe the story is imperfect. The author's name is unknown.

Some of the elder divines of Scotland fostered the salutary belief among their flocks, that the spirits of wicked men returned to earth, and allowed no rest to their children or their heirs till reparation was made of wrongs they had inflicted on the widow and the orphan. The spirits of the persecutors had a long vigil on earth—they had much to repent of, and much to disclose.

THE AULD GOODMAN.

Late in an evening forth I went,
A little before the sun gaed down,
And there I chanced, by accident,
To light on a battle new begun.
A man and his wife had faun in a strife,
I canna well tell how it began;
But ay she wail'd her wretched life,
And cry'd ever, Alake, my auld goodman.

Thy auld goodman that thou tells of,
The country kens where he was born,
Was but a silly poor vagabond,
And ilka ane leugh him to scorn;
For he did spend, and make an end
Of gear that his forefathers wan,
He gart the poor stand frae the door,
Sae tell nae mair of thy auld goodman.

My heart, alake, is like to break,
When I think on my winsome John;
His blinkin ee, and gate sae free,
Was naething like thee, thou dosen'd drone.
His rosie face, and flaxen hair,
And a skin as white as ony swan,
Was large and tall, and comely withal,
And thou'lt never be like my auld goodman.

Why dost thou pleen? I thee maintain,
For meal and maut thou disna want;
But thy wild bees I canna please,
Now when our gear 'gins to grow scant.
Of household stuff thou hast enough,
Thou wants for neither pot nor pan;
Of siclike ware he left thee bare,
Sae tell nae mair of thy auld goodman.

Yes, I may tell, and fret mysell,
To think on those blyth days I had,
When he and I together lay
In arms into a well-made bed;
But now I sigh and may be sad,
Thy courage is cauld, thy colour wan,
Thou falds thy feet, and fa's asleep,
And thou'lt ne'er be like my auld goodman.

Then coming was the night sae dark,
And gane was a' the light o' day;
The carle was fear'd to miss his mark,
And therefore wad nae langer stay;
Then up he gat, and ran his way,
I trow the wife the day she wan,
And ay the o'erword of the fray
Was ever, Alake, my auld goodman.

The Auld Goodman is written in the free and overflowing manner of the olden times—dramatic, humorous, and sarcastic—hovering on the very borders of indelicacy

without being indelicate, and involving a very serious and indecorous question without any breach of decorum. I will not deny, however, that the minstrel has been rather more graphic and minute than is acceptable among very refined people now. We owe this relique of the ancient Muse to the vigilance of Allan Ramsay; and though the language may be modernized, it carries the olden stamp too vigorously impressed to have undergone any extensive change. It attracted the notice of Percy, who, while he copies it into his Reliques, suspects it of corruption in various places, but in truth he seems to be the corrupter himself. He has changed the following lines, and gained nought but obscurity for his trouble:

> For he did spend, and make an end
> Of gear that his forefathers wan.

These lines have the merit of a visible meaning; can we say the same of those of the bishop?

> For he did spend, and make an end
> Of gear his fathers never wan.

They either mean that the first husband, whose memory is so dear to his modest relict, squandered her dower, or that he spent, near the close of his life, what he had gained at the beginning; which is far from likely, if the story be true that his successor relates. I have several versions of the song, but I choose to abide by that of Ramsay, as probably the oldest, and certainly the best. The author's name is unknown.

LADY ANN.

Fair lady Ann walked from her bower,
  Down by the greenwood side,
The sweet flowers sprang, and wild birds sang,
  The simmer was in pride.
Among the flowers that lady went,
  As white as was the swan;
And she thought on her love and sighed,
  The gentle lady Ann.

Out of the wood came three bonnie boys,
  As naked as they were born,
And they did sing and play at the ba',
  Beneath a milk-white thorn.
A seven lang years would I stand here,
  All noon, and night, and dawn,
And all for one of thae bonnie boys,
  Quo' gentle lady Ann.

Then up and spake the eldest boy:
  Now listen, thou fair ladie—
O we lay a' at ae milk-white breast,
  And nursed were on ae knee;

Ae sweet lip smiled on us as we smiled,
And there was a snaw-white han',
As gentle and kin', and fair as thine,
That watched us, lady Ann.

O come to me, thou lily-white boy,
The bonniest of the three!
O come, O come, thou lily-white boy,
My little bower-boy to be!
I'll cleed thee all in silk and gold,
And nurse thee on my knee—
Oh mother, oh mother, when I was thine,
Sic love I couldna see.

I found this song imperfect, and I know not that either to supply or discover the concluding verses would add much to the interest of the story. The death of the children is imputed to a false nurse, in an older copy published in the Minstrelsy; but one of the verses accuses the lady herself, and the traditional fragments quoted by Sir Walter seem to countenance the charge. I remember a verse, and but a verse, of an old ballad which records a horrible instance of barbarity. A lady was in a condition like that of many ladies who figure in ballad and romance:

She set her back against a thorn,
And there she has her young son born:
O smile na sae, my bonnie babe!
An ye smile sae sweet, ye'll smile me dead.

At this moment a hunter came—one whose suit the lady had long rejected with scorn—the brother of her lover:

He took the babe on his spear point,
And threw it upon a thorn:
Let the wind blow east, the wind blow west,
The cradle will rock alone.

It is as well to let such narratives perish, and I am glad I remember no more of it. I have some suspicion that the fine old song of Lady Mary Ann had once a meaning much less reputable for the lady than it has at present: the commencing lines have an older air than the remainder of the song.

THE DEMON LOVER.

O where have ye been, my long lost love,
These long seven years and more?
O all to mind ye of deep, deep vows,
I come rom a distant shore.
O speak no more of deep, deep vows,
They'll breed me mickle strife—
O haud your tongue of my maiden vows,
For I am a wedded wife.

He turned him right and round about,
And his colour mounted high:
O I have breasted the foaming waves
When sea mixed with the sky;
I sank my enemies on my right,
And sank them on the lee,
And might have married a king's daughter
Had I not so loved thee.

O were I to leave my ain sweet hame,
And the babes that I love so,
And leave the lord that loves me weel,
Where shall I with you go?
My good ships sail upon the sea,
And one lies nigh the land,
With four-and-twenty mariners bold,
And music on every hand.

And she's ta'en up her two sweet babes,
The tears dropt down like rain:
O fare ye weel, my ain sweet babes,
I'll never kiss you again!
She set her foot on the goodly ship,
And among the mariners bold;
The sails were all of the rustling silk,
And the masts of beaten gold.

They had not sailed a league, a league,
A league, but barely three,

When dark, dark grew his ruddie face,
And dark, dark flashed his ee:
The masts that were of the beaten gold
No shadow showed on the seas—
The sails that were of the rustling silk
Filled not with the fresh'ning breeze:

The mariners vanished from the deck,
And the wind came with a sweep—
That lady saw the foot of the fiend,
And loud, loud can she weep.
O lady, stint your sorrow, he says,
And your weeping let it be;
For now we go where the lilies grow,
On the banks of Italie.

What hills are yon—yon pleasant hills,
That the sun shines sweetly on?
O yon are the hills of heaven, he said,
Where we will never win.
O what wild mountain's this, she said,
All dreary wi' frost and snow?
O it is the mountain of hell, ladie,
Where you and I must go.

And aye as she gave a sob and a look,
Aye taller he seemed to be—
Till the golden masts of that gallant ship
Nae taller seemed than he.

He smote the topmast with his hand,
The foremast wi' his knee,
And he brake that gallant ship in twain,
And sank her in the sea.

This wild legendary song is nowhere to be found save in the collection of Sir Walter Scott. It was copied from recitation by Mr. Laidlaw of Traquairknowe. It embodies an old and very popular superstition, current alike in England and Ireland and Germany. In "Satan's Invisible World Discovered" we find the story of a youth, a lover of wine and fine women, whom the enemy of mankind sought to ruin in the form of a very beautiful lady. The wiles of the fiend are described with some naïveté. "I remember," says Sir Walter Scott, "to have heard a ballad in which a fiend is introduced paying his addresses to a beautiful maiden; but, disconcerted by the holy herbs which she wore in her bosom, makes the following lines the burthen of his courtship:

'Gin ye wish to be, leman, mine,
Lay aside the St. John's-wort and the vervain."

There is a story told of a fiend, or evil spirit, who contrived, under a lady's form and with many pleasant words, to gain the consent of a youth to meet her on the bank of a wild stream at the head of Nithsdale. The hour of meeting was midnight, and the earthly lover and

his infernal admirer were true to tryste, and met at the appointed place. The spirit, however, in spite of all her arts, was unable to retain the outward lustre with which she had endowed herself; and ever as she sought to touch him, her beauty faded and she grew more like a fiend from the pit than a lady fit for the arms of a lover. The youth beheld her with dismay and disgust; but whenever he stepped a step or two from her, she became again lovely and beautiful. Those of a devout turn will be glad to know that a small New Testament, which a pious mother had slipped into an indiscreet son's pocket, interposed between him and utter ruin, and that his resolution not to cast it away caused the fiend to depart in a flash of fire, exclaiming, "But for that book, ye had supped with me in hell!" Tales of this character, popular to this day in Scotland, would augment this note into a curious volume; but enough has been said to illustrate the superstition of the song.

RATTLING ROARING WILLIE.

Our Rattling Roaring Willie
Went off to Selkirk fair,
To sell his merry fiddle
And buy more thrifty ware.
But parting wi' his fiddle,
The saut tear dimm'd his ee:
I'll sell my sweet bread-winner,
And then lie down an' die.

Now, Willie, man, sell your fiddle—
Come sell your fiddle so fine:
O Willie, come sell your fiddle,
And buy a pint o' wine.
Were I to sell my fiddle,
The world would ca' me mad,
For monie a ranting day
My fiddle and I ha'e had.

I made my gallant fiddle
Of our repentance-stool;
The lasses went wild wi' laughing,
And danced frae Paste to Yule—
The doucest foot o' the parish
Has wagg'd to it wantonlie;
O monie's the mirthsome minute
My fiddle has made for me.

As I came in by Crochallan
I cannilie keeket ben,
An' Rattling Roaring Willie
Was sitting at our board en',
An' drawing his best bow-hand,
An' drinking the wine sae free—
O Rattling Roaring Willie,
Ye're welcome hame to me.

Johnson's Musical Museum has the merit of introducing this version of Rattling Roaring Willie to public notice with a concluding verse by Burns. The addition by the poet was in honour of "one of the worthiest fellows in the world, William Dunbar, Esq. writer to the Signet, Edinburgh, and Colonel of the Crochallan corps—a club of wits who took that title at the time of raising the fencible regiments." The main part of the song is of some antiquity, but many emendations have crept in from time to time, which, without injuring the original freshness, have improved the language and the propriety of the song. The third verse is now printed for the first time.

MARIE HAMILTON.

Marie Hamilton's to the preaching gone,
Wi' ribbons in her hair:
The king thought mair o' Marie Hamilton
Than ony that were there.
Marie Hamilton's to the preaching gone,
Wi' ribbons on her breast:
Of Marie fair the king thought mair
Than he thought of the priest.

Syne word has o'er the palace flown,
I heard it told yestreen,
The king loves Marie Hamilton
Mair than he loves his queen.—
A sad word o'er the palace flew,
A sad word on the morrow,—
O Marie Hamilton's born a babe,
And slain it in her sorrow!

Rise up now, Marie, said the queen,
Rise up, and come wi' me,
For we maun ride to Holyrood,
A gay wedding to see.
The queen was drest in scarlet fine,
Her maidens all in green,
And every town that they rode through
Took Marie for the queen.

But little wist Marie Hamilton,
As she rode o'er the lea,
That she was gaun to Edinbro town,
Her doom to hear and dree:
When she came to the Netherbow-port,
She laughed loud laughters three:
But when she reached the gallows foot,
The tears blinded her ee.

O often have I dress'd my queen,
And put gold in her hair—
The gallows tree is my reward,
And shame maun be my share!
O often have I dress'd my queen,
And soft, soft made her bed—
And now I've got for my reward
The gallows' tree to tread!

I charge ye all, ye mariners,
When ye sail o'er the faem,
Let neither my father nor
But that I'm
I charge

The lands I was to travel in,
Or the death I was to die!
Yestreen the queen had four Maries,
The night she'll have but three;
There was Marie Seaton, and Marie Beaton,
And Mary Carmichael and me.

Of the Marie Hamilton which this song mentions as one of the maids of honour to Mary, queen of Scotland, history has taken no heed; and the history of that period is too accurate and minute to have passed unnoticed the sin and the tragic close of the life of a court beauty. It is true that a Frenchwoman sinned and suffered in this manner, but she was not one of the "Queen's Maries;" and I would more willingly believe that the song alludes to the crime and punishment of miss Hamilton, one of the maids of honour to the empress Catherine of Russia. She had murdered her illegitimate children, and was beheaded. Peter, the emperor, who stood by her on the scaffold, embraced her with [illegible] and when the head was struck [illegible] lips while they yet

of Queen Mary, the apostle proceeds: "But yet was not the court purged of whores and whoredoms, which was the fountain of such enormities; for it is well known that shame hasted marriage betwixt John Sempill, called the Dancer, and Mary Levingstone, surnamed the Lusty. What bruit the Maries and the rest of the dancers of the court had, the ballads of that age do witness, which we, for modesty's sake, omit; but this was the common complaint of all godly and wise men, that if they thought such a court could long continue, and if they looked for no better life to come, they would have wished their sons and daughters rather to have been brought up with fiddlers and dancers, and to have been exercised with flinging upon a floor, and in the rest that thereof follows, than to have been exercised in the company of the godly and exercised in virtue, which in that court was hated, and filthiness not only maintained but also rewarded; witness the abbey of Abercorn and barony of Auchmuchty, and divers others pertaining to the [illegible] of the crown, given in heritage to [illegible] and dalliers with dames."

In arranging [illegible] which [illegible]

But she wad put on her gown of gowd,
To glance through Embro' town:
O saddle me not the black, she says,
Nor saddle to me the brown,
But saddle to me my milk-white steed,
That I may ride in renown.

It ought to be mentioned, as an excuse for all this bravery of appearance on the way to death, that she blames her nurse for the murder of her child in a preceding verse, and resolves to die as one who was doomed unjustly. The first four lines of the concluding verse of the song have been quoted and praised by Burns.

END OF VOL. I.


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Government of Maharashtra
on 10 February, 2016